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# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW

Writer and BoingBoing.net co-editor Cory Doctorow has won acclaim for his science-fiction writing as well as his Creative Commons presentation of his material. Now, IDW Publishing is proud to present six standalone stories adapted from Doctorow's work, each featuring pin-ups by some of comics' top talents including Sam Kieth, Scott Morse, Paul Pope, Ben Templesmith, Ashley Wood, and more. Stories collected include: The Locus Award-winning "When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth;" "Anda's Game," a story selected for inclusion in the Michael Chabon edited 2005 *Best American Short Stories*; "Craphound," a story selected for *Year's Best Science Fiction XVI*; "Nimby and the D-Hoppers," selected for *Year's Best Science Fiction IX*; The Hugo-nominated and Locus Award-winning "I Robot;" and "After the Siege."

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Cory Doctorow's  
Futuristic Tales of the Here and Now

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# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW







# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW™



# CORY DOCTOROW'S FUTURISTIC TALES OF THE HERE AND NOW

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# What Came First

By Cory Doctorow

I literally can't remember a time in my life when I wasn't a comics reader. There were comics and science fiction novels around the house from the time I could reach the shelves, and I started looking at the pictures even before I could read the words.

Nevertheless, I became a prose writer, not a comics writer. For starters, you could read a book and figure out *how* it was written: the writer sat down and hammered out a stream of words, they were typeset and the book was published. But how did you write a comic? Did the writer describe each panel? Just write the dialog? I remember talking it over with friends at summer camp and there was one kid who was dead *certain* that the *artist* drew all the pictures first and then the writer figured out what the story would be, writing the dialog that made it all make sense!

Then there was the matter of authorship. I knew who Stan Lee was, of course—that guy with The Voice who did the voice-overs on the *Hulk* cartoons. But who actually "wrote" these comics? I was pretty sure that Stan Lee—and whomever it was with the initials of "D.C."—weren't penning all the funny books on the spinner rack at the convenience store. *MAD Magazine* had by-lines: Al Jaffee, Dave Berg. But it seemed like the comics' authors' names were tiny, downplayed—unimportant. If I was going to grow up to be a writer, I wanted to be an *important* writer—not just a farmhand on Uncle Stan's Ranch.

So now I'm a writer (importance: debatable). The books I write have my name in big letters on the spine and cover. For better or for worse, they're the products of my imagination and what happens in them is pretty much down to what I imagine.

Not long ago, the folks at IDW sent me an email and asked me if I'd be game for licensing some of my stories to be adapted for comics. I was a little skeptical: I don't know anything about writing comics (though I was pretty sure by this point that the words come before the pictures)—and what's more, I do this whacky thing with my books and stories where I make them available as free, re-mixable downloads on the day they're published, and I just didn't have the energy to argue about this with some comics people.

My agent got in touch with IDW, talked to them for a while and came back to me: "No problem," he said. "They'll get kick-ass writers and illustrators to do the adaptations, and they'll let us do the whole series under a Creative Commons license once it's collected into a single volume." Awesome. "Plus, I got you approval over the scripts and art as part of the deal." Huh? What do I know about art and scripts for comics? Well, it can't hurt.

####

What followed was an education in the whole production cycle for comics, from treatment to script to rough art to final art to lettering and inking to covers. And I got to be a part of it. I mostly sat back and tried not to screw things up—though as the author of the underlying stories, I was sometimes (infrequently) moved to intervene and redirect the abridgment process.

Mostly, I just sat back in awe as a crew of incredibly talented writers and artists paid me the immense compliment of focusing their creative energy on the work that I'd done. I got to watch as these people interpreted my ideas, got to more-or-less peer into the heads of readers and discover, in detail, what happened between the words I wrote and the words they read. It's a spookily cool process. I heartily recommend it to you—in fact, I'm trying to figure out a compact, quick way of doing this with my writing students in the future. It taught me a lot about writing.

And now here we are, with this extraordinary volume in hand (or on your screen—hi there, downloaders!). I can call it extraordinary without too much ego because this is, in a very meaningful sense, *not my book*: it's a book that was written, drawn and lettered by Dara Naraghi, Esteve Polls, Sam Keith, Robert Studio, J.C. Vaughn, Daniel Warner, Scott Morse, Paul McCaffrey, Paul Pope, Dan Taylor, Dustin Evans, Ben Templesmith, Erich Owens, Ashley Wood, James Anthony Kuhoric, Guiu Vilanova, German Torres, Danny Parsons, Robbie Robbins, Neil Uyetake, Chris Mowry, and Amauri Osorio. It's got my name on the cover—I guess I'm the schmucky Stan Lee figure on this spin of the karma wheel—but they did it.

And now I want to write comics. I've seen how it's done. I think I can do it. I guess we'll all find out, soon enough.

Cory Doctorow  
March 2008







**Ando's Game**





ANDA DIDN'T REALLY START TO PLAY THE GAME UNTIL SHE GOT HERSELF A GIRL-SHAPED AVATAR.



SHE WAS 12, AND THE ONLY GIRLS SHE'D EVER SEEN IN-GAME WERE SHAPED LIKE A BOY'S IDEA OF WHAT A GIRL LOOKED LIKE: HUGE BUZZWABS AND LONG LEGS ALL BARELY CONTAINED IN TINY, POINTLESS LEATHER BIKINI-ARMOUR.

BINTWARE, SHE CALLED IT.



HULLLO, CHICKENS.

THAT ALL CHANGED THE DAY HER SCHOOL WAS CALLED TO ASSEMBLY.



I AM LIZA THE ORGANIZA, AND I KICK ARSE, SERIOUSLY.

I AM THE BEST GAMER IN THE WORLD, AND I'M EL PRESIDENTE OF THE ENTIRE CLAN FAHRENHEIT. MY BATTLE RECORD IS 3,522 KILLS IN A SINGLE BATTLE. I HAVE TAKEN HOME CASH PRIZES TOTALING MORE THAN 400,000 POUNDS.

AND I'M HERE TO LET YOU IN ON A SECRET: GIRLS KICK ARSE. WE'RE FASTER, SMARTER, AND BETTER THAN BOYS. WE PLAY HARDER.



GAMESPACE SMELLS LIKE A BOY'S ARMPIT.

WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THAT, CHICKENS, YOU LOT AND ME. SO HERE'S MY OFFER TO YOU...



...IF YOU WILL PLAY AS A GIRL, YOU WILL BE GIVEN PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIPS IN THE CLAN FAHRENHEIT.

AND IF YOU MEASURE UP, YOU'LL BECOME FULL-FLEDGED MEMBERS. SO WHO'S IN, CHICKENS?



THE FAHRENHEITS HAD CHAPTERS IN EVERY GAME. THEY WERE AMAZING AND DEADLY AND COOL, AND ANDA WAS GOING TO BE ONE OF THEM.





EVERY EVENING AFTER SCHOOL, WHILE HER PARENTS WATCHED SOMETHING LOUD ON THE TELLY, ANDA WOULD GO ON MISSIONS WITH LUCY, HER BEST FRIEND IN-GAME.

LUCY LIVED SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF AMERICA, WHERE IT WAS ALL VOWELS— IOWA OR OHIO OR SOMETHING.



ANDA, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE SOME MONEY?

YOU MEAN GOLD, LUCY?



CALL ME SARGE!

AND NO, NOT GOLD. I HAVE A MISSION THAT PAYS REAL CASH.



SOUNDS A BIT WEIRD, SARGE. IS THAT AGAINST CLAN RULES?

CLAN LEADERSHIP ENFORCED A CODE OF CONDUCT THAT WAS MEANT TO ENSURE THAT NONE OF THE FAHRENHEIT GIRLIES ENDED UP BEING VIRTUAL PROZZIES.



NO... GEEZ. ALL THE EXECUTIVES IN THE CLAN PAY THE RENT DOING MISSIONS FOR MONEY.

BESIDES, MY CONTACT SAID THEY JUST WANT US TO GO KILL SOME GUYS.



OH, WE'RE GOOD AT THAT!

>please sorry u cn have my gold sorry!!!!!!



YOU'RE A NASTY PERSON, ANDA.

>I'm a Fahrenheit!!!!!!



THE MISSION TOOK THEM TO A COTTAGE ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE GAMEWORLD.



GOOD THING YOU HAD A SCRYING SCROLL LEFT. LOOKS LIKE THE PLACE IS PRETTY WELL-DEFENDED.

YEAH, I COUNT SEVEN GUARDS.

NOT A PROBLEM. MY STANDARD DODGE-AND-WEAVE PATTERN WORKS GREAT FOR RUSHING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS.



RIGHT, I'LL COVER YOU.



THIS'LL BE OVER BEFORE—

WHAT THE—?



SARGE, I THINK THEY'RE ACTUALLY PLAYERS!



BUT WHO WANTS TO SIT AROUND IN GAMESPACE WATCHING A BORING ROAD ALL DAY?

WHO CARES?



GET DOWN, I'M GONNA USE THE BFG!

EVERY GAME HAD ONE: THE **BIG FRIENDLY GUN**, THE GENERIC TERM FOR THE BADDEST-ARSE WEAPON IN THE WORLD. LUCY HAD RENTED THIS ONE FROM THE CLAN ARMORY FOR A SMALL FORTUNE IN GOLD.



HOLY—!





NUKE 'EM  
TILL THEY GLOW  
AND SHOOT 'EM  
IN THE DARK!  
YEE-HAW!



I COUNT THREE  
SURVIVORS. I'M  
ON THEM.



> Urgh!



MAKE  
THAT TWO  
SURVIVORS.



YEEEAARGH!



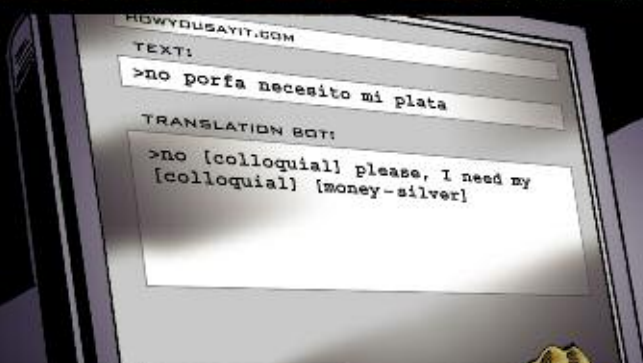
> die!

NO, NO, NO!  
IT'S STUCK!











LUCY'S VOICE IN HER EAR WAS A CONSTANT COMPANION IN HER LIFE NOW, AS THEY RAN MISSIONS INTO THE WEE HOURS OF THE NIGHT.

BUT, SARGE, I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY ANYONE WOULD PAY US CASH FOR THESE MISSIONS.

DUNNO, EITHER. HELL, IT'S PROBABLY TWO RICH GAMERS. ONE'S FUCKING WITH THE OTHER ONE AND PAYING US.

YOU REALLY THINK THAT?

\*SIGH\* LOOK AT IT THIS WAY—MOST OF THE WORLD IS LIVING ON, LIKE, A DOLLAR A DAY. MY DAD SENDS MOM THREE THOUSAND A MONTH IN CHILD-SUPPORT, AND WE'RE NOT EVEN RICH! BUT TO AN AFRICAN OR WHATEVER, I AM.

\*ANDA, IT'S NOT HEALTHY FOR YOU TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME WITH YOUR GAME,\* HER DA WOULD SAY.

SO THERE'S PROBABLY SOME SAUDI OR JAPANESE GUY OR RUSSIAN MAFIA KID OUT THERE WHO'S SO RICH THAT THIS IS JUST CHUMP CHANGE FOR HIM, AND HE'S PAYING US TO MESS AROUND WITH SOME OTHER RICH PERSON.

"DAAAA!" SHE'D PROTEST. "I GO TO P.E. EVERY STINKING DAY."

TO THEM, WE'RE LIKE THE AFRICANS MAKING A DOLLAR A DAY TO CRAFT... I MEAN, SEW T-SHIRTS.

"OK, ANDA. BUT DO TRY TO GET A LITTLE MORE EXERCISE, PLEASE?"

GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE.

NICE ONE, ANDA.

THANKS, SARGE.

NOW LET'S GO FIND THAT NEW COTTAGE.





BLOODY HELL.

THIS IS NUTS! I'M CALLING THEM. THIS IS NUTS.



OK, I JUST CALLED IN THREE SQUADS OF FAHRENHEIT VETERANS AND THEIR NOOB APPRENTICES FOR BACKUP.

THEY'LL BE HERE IN AN HOUR.



SARGE, THIS ISN'T A MISSION ANYMORE...



"...IT'S WAR!"

"YEAH! AND I'VE NEGOTIATED A BONUS FOR US IF WE MAKE IT—A MILLION GOLD AND THREE MISSIONS' WORTH OF CASH!"





GAMEWAR. HUNDREDS OF FAHRENHEITS CONVERGING ON THIS SHARD, SQUARING OFF AGAINST THE RANKED MERCENARIES GUARDING THE COTTAGE.



THE VOICE CHAT WAS LIKE A WIND-TUNNEL FROM ALL THE UNMUTED, BREATHING VOICES.



HUNDREDS OF GIRLS IN HUNDREDS OF BEDROOMS LIKE ANDA'S, ALL OVER THE WORLD.







THE FAHRENHEITS' GREATER NUMBERS AND DISCIPLINE WERE OVERWHELMING.



EVERY MERC WAS EVENTUALLY RUN OFF.

OR BUTCHERED.

OK, I PAID OFF ALL THE SQUADS. THEY'RE HEADING BACK TO BASE.

MAN, THAT WAS BUGFUCK NUTSO! BUT WE MADE IT!



NOW WE TAKE THE COTTAGE.

RIGHT. BUT LET ME FIRST SCRY THE—



I'LL BE GLAD WHEN WE'RE DONE WITH THIS.

HEY!









>talk, then

>my name is raymond,  
and i live in tijuana.  
i am a labor organizer  
in the factories here.

>do you know who these  
people are that you're  
killing?

>no

>they're working for  
less than a dollar a  
day. the shirts they  
make are traded for  
gold and the gold is  
sold on ebay. they're  
mostly young girls  
supporting their  
families. they're the  
lucky ones: the unlucky  
ones work as  
prostitutes.



>the bosses used to use  
bots, but the game has  
countermeasures against  
them. hiring children to  
click the mouse is  
cheaper than hiring  
programmers to  
circumvent the rules.

>i've been trying to  
unionize them because  
they've got a very high  
rate of injury. they  
have to play for 18-hour  
shifts with only one  
short toilet break.

>some of them  
can't hold it  
in and they  
soil themselves  
where they sit.

>look, it's none of  
my lookout, is it?  
the world's like  
that. i'm just a  
kid. theres nothing  
i can do about it.



>when you  
kill them,  
they don't  
get paid.  
they lose  
their day's  
wages.

>do you know who  
is paying you to  
do these killings?

>not a clue

|>i've been trying to  
find that out myself.

|>...

|>ah. i see. i am the  
only one remaining.

|>go ahead. i will see  
you again. i'm sure.













THE PC BAANG WAS FILLED WITH STINKY, SPOTTY BOYS, BEING LOUD AND OBNOXIOUS.

BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER.



ANDA WAS BACK IN THE GAME.

SORRY, SARGE. MY DA TOOK... ER, MY PC'S BEEN BROKEN.

JESUS, ANDA, WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?



WELL, I'VE GOT A BACKLOG OF MISSIONS, SO LET'S GO.

LISTEN... I MET A GUY AFTER THE LAST CAMPAIGN. HE SAID HE WAS A UNION ORGANIZER.

OH, YOU MET RAYMOND, HUH? HE'S BEEN TURNING UP EVERYWHERE. WHAT A CREEP.



SO YOU KNEW ABOUT THE NOOBS IN THE COTTAGES?

AND YOU'RE FINE WITH DEPRIVING LITTLE KIDS OF THEIR WAGES?

ANDA, LISTEN, YOU LOVE GAMING, RIGHT? IT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?



YEAH, 'COURSE IT IS.

RIGHT, AND WE'RE BAD-ASS, YOU AND ME, AND WE GOT THAT WAY THROUGH DISCIPLINE AND HARD WORK, RIGHT?

YES, RIGHT, BUT—

THAT'S WHAT MAKES US ALL FAHRENHEITS—WE'RE COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER, TO TEAMWORK, AND TO FAIR PLAY.

BUT THESE PEOPLE IN MEXICO OR WHEREVER, THEY'RE EARNING THEIR LIVING BY EXPLOITING THE GAME.









>that's who you're about to deprive of a day's wages.



OH, HELL NO! I KILLED HIM LAST TIME AND I SAID I'D DO IT AGAIN IF HE EVER TRIED TO SHOW ME PHOTOS.

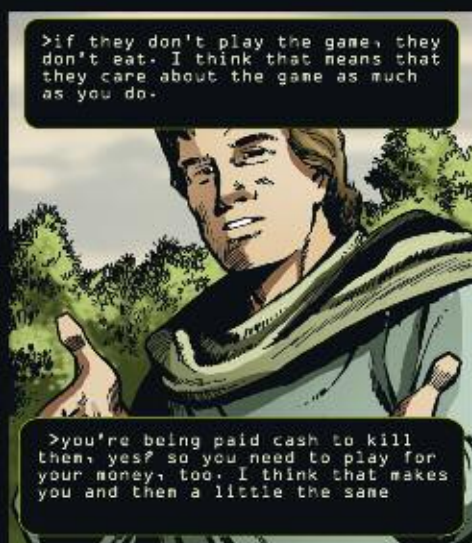
LUCY, DON'T. HE DESERVES TO HAVE A SAY.



>what do you want from me, raymond?

>don't kill them. let them have their wages. go play somewhere else

>they're leeches. they don't care about the game and neither do you



>if they don't play the game, they don't eat. I think that means that they care about the game as much as you do.

>you're being paid cash to kill them, yes? so you need to play for your money, too. I think that makes you and then a little the same



LUCY, DON'T!

>go screw yourself











>I'm very sorry  
you and your  
friend quarreled.



>the enemy isn't the players  
guarding the fabbrica, and it's not  
the girls working there. the people  
who are working to destroy the game  
are the people who pay you and the  
girls in the fabbrica. but they are  
the same people.



> you're being paid by  
rival factory owners,  
you know that? they  
are the ones who care  
nothing for the game.

>my girls care  
about the game.  
you care about  
the game. your  
common enemy is  
the people who  
want to destroy  
the game and  
who destroy the  
lives of these  
girls.



THERE WERE LOTS OF RULES  
FOR FAHRENHEITS, AND THE  
PENALTIES FOR BREAKING  
THEM VARIED.



BUT ANDA KNEW THE PENALTY  
FOR ATTACKING A FELLOW  
FAHRENHEIT: **EXPULSION.**







AND, DEAR, THERE'S A PHONE CALL FOR YOU.

SOMEONE FROM YOUR GAME, I THINK.



HULLO?

HULLO, CHICKEN.

LIZA?

YES. CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?

SHE DID, STUMBLING OVER THE DETAILS, BACK-TRACKING AND STUTTERING.

-AND I... I DON'T THINK IT'S *RIGHT* TO KILL THEM, THOSE GIRLS. ALL RIGHT?

WELL, I HAPPEN TO AGREE. THOSE GIRLS NEED OUR *HELP* MORE THAN ANY OF THE GIRLS ANYWHERE IN THE GAME.

THE FAHRENHEITS' *STRENGTH* IS THAT WE *CARE*. IT'S ANOTHER WAY THAT WE'RE BETTER THAN THE BOYS.



I'M *PROUD* THAT YOU TOOK A STAND WHEN YOU DID.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO *EXPEL* ME?

NO, CHICKEN. I THINK YOU DID THE RIGHT THING?



IF YOU *EXPEL* LUCY, I'LL *QUIT*...

OH, CHICKEN, YOU'RE A *BRAVE* THING, AREN'T YOU?

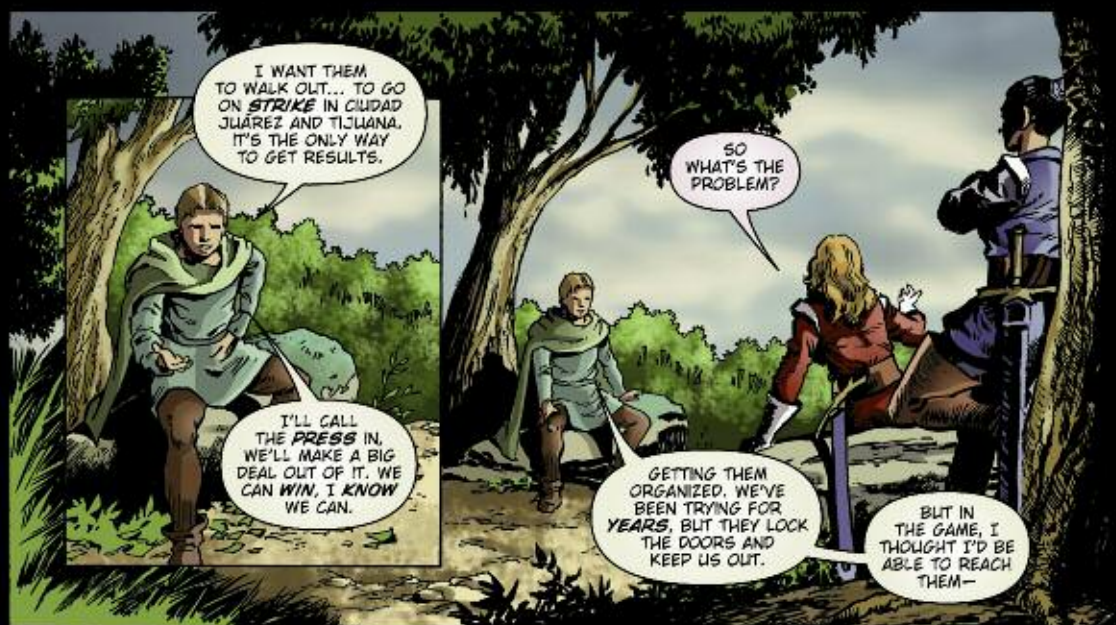
NO ONE'S BEING *EXPELLED*, FEAR NOT. BUT I WANTA *TALK* TO THIS RAYMOND OF YOURS.















## DOCTOROW ON: "ANDA'S GAME"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, let's start with the obvious question—what sparked the idea for "Anda's Game"?

**Cory Doctorow:** Two things; one was my idea of writing a bunch of stories that riffed on the titles of famous SF—I, Robot, *Anda's Game* (*Ender's Game*), *I, Row-Boat* and soon, *True Names*—after hearing Ray Bradbury disparage this practice, calling it rude and immoral. Bradbury was pissed off at Michael Moore for calling his movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Bradbury supports Bush's plan to go to Mars—but I thought that this was just goofy. Titles are—and have always been—fair game. What's more, *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury's classic novel, is all about free expression (Bradbury denies this—he says it's about television, which is why you should never ask writers what their work is about). (Should we end the interview now?)

The other thing was the early reports of gold farming in games, something that really sparked my imagination.

**TW:** I consider myself a semi-avid video gamer, and when I first read "Anda's Game," I thought it was a bizarre vision of a possible future, only to read an article recently about how China is taking over in the gaming "sweat shop" market from other developing nations like Mexico. For me, personally, it's a sad and pathetic reality that videogames have become so important to some people that they are willing to go to great lengths to cheat at the games, even so far as purchasing in-game characters that were earned through what truly amounts to industrial slavery. Do you feel that gaming has become too important, and, if so, is the technology to blame... or the gamers themselves?

**CD:** No, gaming hasn't become too important! MMORPGS and other MMOs are social constructs, agoras where we meet, socialize, make friends, cooperate, and play together. It's where we undertake the business of civilization. It's a goddamned shame that (so far) all of these civilizations-in-bottles are owned by giant media companies (worse still, that Universal/Blizzard, a really abusive bully, owns *World of Warcraft*, the most

popular), but asking if play has become too important is as silly as asking if art has become too important, or thought, or scholarship.

**TW:** When I sent you the artwork for "Anda's Game," penciled by the fantastic Esteve Polls, your reaction to seeing it for the first time was... and I quote... "Holy crap, this is EERILY COOL!" I was hoping you could expand on that and describe the different feelings you are having as you see your short prose stories coming to life in illustrated sequential form.

**CD:** Well, I'd never really had my work adapted before. When a talented artist like Polls turns my work into something that isn't what I saw in my mind's eye, but IS a plausible thing for a reader to see, it's like being able to stick a reader in an MRI while she reads one of my stories and see what it's doing to her head.

**TW:** Taking the last question a step further, we have various comic book writers adapting your short stories in script form for this project—specifically for "Anda's Game," writer Dara Naraghi. What things do you look for in a script based on your work before you approve it for publication?

**CD:** Well, it has to suit the work—it doesn't have to be accurate (in the sense of portraying all the events that took place in the work), but it DOES have to be faithful to the artistic intent and mood that inspired the work.

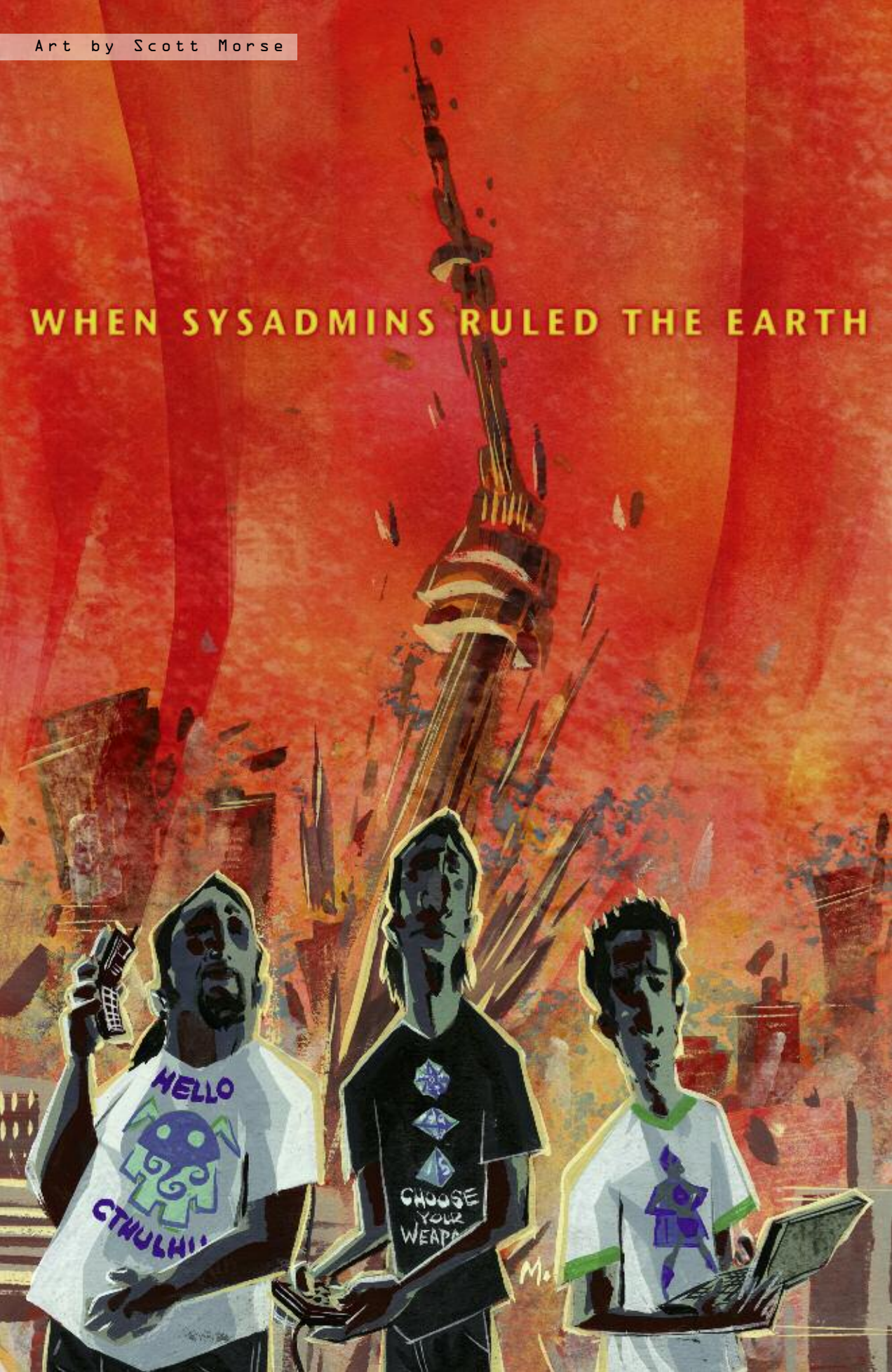
**TW:** Have you ever considered scripting your own comic book series or graphic novel?

**CD:** Every now and again. I have a million projects on my plate right now—BoingBoing and umpty boinglets, little blog projects that we're playing with; a movie I'm co-producing; a TV show I'm consulting on; two nonfiction books; a zillion short story ideas; my podcast; travel; speaking (and I'm moving home to London from LA in two weeks!).



Art by Scott Morse

# WHEN SYSADMINS RULED THE EARTH





THE SUBURBS OF TORONTO,  
ONTARIO, CANADA, 1:33 AM.





A close-up, high-contrast illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing a dark shirt. He is holding a mobile phone to his ear with his right hand. The background is dark and textured.

HELLO?

"MAIN ROUTERS NOT RESPONDING. BGP NOT RESPONDING," THE MECHANICAL VOICE OF THE SYSTEMS MONITOR SAID. HE CURSED A LITTLE CURSE AT IT AND FELT A LITTLE BETTER.

A close-up illustration of a woman with dark hair looking down at a man who is lying down. The man's face is partially visible in the lower left corner. The scene is dimly lit with a blueish tint.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TURN THAT THING OFF BEFORE WE WENT TO BED, FELIX?

YOU'RE NOT A DOCTOR. YOU'RE A SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR... AND YOU'RE A FATHER NOW!





IT'S  
MY JOB,  
KELLY.

MAYBE I  
CAN LOG IN  
AND FIX IT  
FROM HERE.



IN FIVE YEARS  
OF MARRIAGE, YOU  
HAVE NEVER ONCE  
BEEN ABLE TO FIX  
ANYTHING FROM  
HERE.



SHE WAS WRONG ABOUT THAT, OF  
COURSE. HE HAD FIXED PLENTY OF  
MINOR THINGS FROM HOME, ONLY  
HE DIDN'T MAKE A BIG DEAL ABOUT  
IT, SO SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER.



THE MECHANICAL VOICE CALLED HIM TWICE MORE ON THE WAY THERE. THEN KELLY CALLED.

DON'T CRINGE. I CAN HEAR THE CRINGE IN YOUR VOICE.

NO CRINGING. CHECK.

I'M TOTALLY BONKERS FOR YOU, KELLY. GO BACK TO BED.

THE BABY'S AWAKE. LISTEN, YOU'VE BEEN THERE SEVEN YEARS—

—YOU HAVE TO GIVE THAT PHONE TO ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO WORKS FOR YOU. YOU'VE PAID YOUR DUES.

I KNOW, SYSADMINS DON'T TAKE HOLIDAYS.

THIS ONE WILL. PROMISE.









MASSIVE  
FLASHWORM ATTACK.  
SOME JACKASS HAS  
EVERY WINDOWS BOX ON  
THE NET RUNNING MONTE  
CARLO PROBES ON EVERY  
IP BLOCK, INCLUDING  
IPV6.

WHICH MEANS  
BASICALLY EVERY  
INTERCHANGE HAS  
GONE DOWN.

ON TOP OF THAT,  
THERE'S AN EMAIL  
AND IM COMPONENT  
THAT SENDS PRETTY  
LIFELIKE MESSAGES TO  
EVERYONE IN YOUR  
ADDRESS BOOK.

IS THAT  
ALL?

+2  
shirt of dan  
(cuz sed

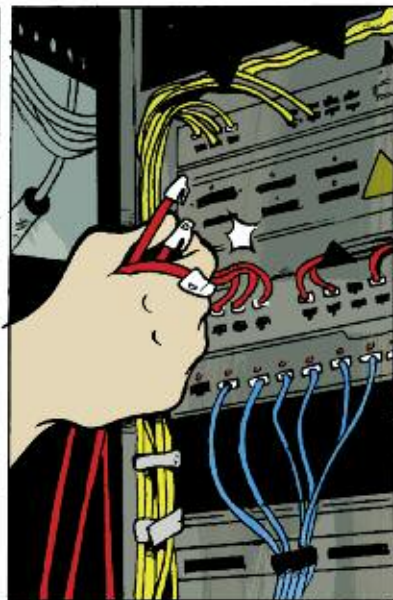
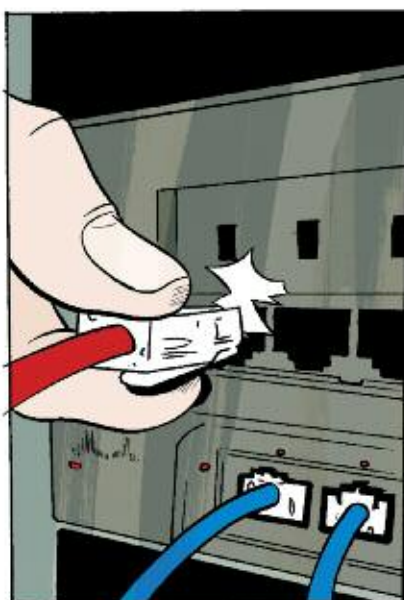


WHAT A  
MESS.



THIS IS  
BIG, BOSS.  
EPIC.












I'M SICK. I  
CAN'T EVEN STAND  
ANYMORE...



WHO, KELLY?  
WHO'S DEAD?



THE BABY.



THE BABY?  
WHAT?

KELLY, WHAT  
HAPPENED?



EVERYONE...  
EVERYONE IS.

ONLY TWO  
CHANNELS ARE  
LEFT ON THE  
AIR...

...IT LOOKS  
LIKE DAWN OF  
THE DEAD OUT  
THE WINDOW.









7:30 AM.







DAY 2, 2:00 AM.

I USED TO  
LIKE THAT IT  
WAS SO COLD  
IN HERE.

WE CAN'T  
LEAVE YET, VAN.  
WE DON'T KNOW  
WHAT'S OUT  
THERE.

WILL'S  
DOWNSTAIRS IN  
ANOTHER CLEAN  
ROOM. MAYBE  
SOME OF THE  
OTHERS...

WHAT  
HAPPENED OUT  
THERE, FELIX?  
WAS IT THE  
WORM?

IT COULDN'T  
HAVE ONLY  
BEEN THE WORM.  
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT  
WAS A LOT OF  
DIFFERENT  
STUFF.

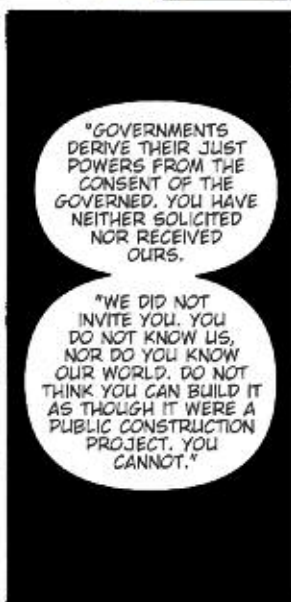
WE'RE JUST  
GOING TO KEEP  
THAT DOOR  
CLOSED UNTIL  
WE—

WE'RE ALL  
GETTING  
TOGETHER ON  
THE SIXTH  
FLOOR.

IF THERE'S A  
BIO-AGENT IN  
THE BUILDING,  
WE'RE ALL DEAD  
ANYWAY.

TALK  
NERDY











DAY 2, 7:45 AM.

> WE CAN USE THE  
NEWSGROUP VOTING  
MECHANISM TO  
HOLD REGIONAL  
ELECTIONS.

> RIGHT. WE'LL  
ELECT REGIONAL  
REPRESENTATIVES  
AND THEY'LL  
PICK A PRIME  
MINISTER.



> I THINK WE  
SHOULD HOLD  
THE ELECTIONS  
AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE.  
TOMORROW AT  
THE LATEST. WE  
CAN'T RULE  
JUSTLY WITHOUT  
THE CONSENT OF  
THE GOVERNED.



> YOU CAN'T BE  
SERIOUS. CONSENT  
OF THE GOVERNED?  
UNLESS I MISS MY  
GUESS, MOST OF  
THE PEOPLE YOU'RE  
PROPOSING TO  
GOVERN ARE PUKING  
THEIR GUTS OUT,  
HIDING UNDER  
THEIR DESKS, OR  
WANDERING  
SHELL-SHOCKED  
THROUGH THE CITY  
STREETS. WHEN DO  
THEY GET A VOTE?





DAY 2, 9:17 PM.

PRIME  
MINISTER OF  
CYBERSPACE?  
THAT'S JUST  
GREAT.

AND VERY  
PRACTICAL,  
TOO.

YOU'RE THE  
ONE WHO WANTED  
TO KNOCK THE  
WHOLE INTERNET  
OFFLINE, WILL.

IF YOU  
DON'T LIKE MY  
PLATFORM, RUN  
AGAINST ME.  
OTHER PEOPLE  
ARE.

DO  
SOMETHING OR  
JUST SHUT UP,  
BUT FOR CRYING  
OUT LOUD, QUIT  
WHINING.

SCREW  
YOU GUYS.  
I'M OUTTA  
HERE.

I THOUGHT  
THAT GUY WOULD  
NEVER LEAVE.



> HEY, KONG. THERE ARE A LOT OF CANDIDATES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

> HAVE YOU SEEN THE PLATFORM FROM THAT U.S. SENATOR? HE APPARENTLY WASN'T IN DC WHEN IT HAPPENED.

> ANYONE WITH A COMPUTER, RIGHT?

> I JUST DON'T GET THE ONES WHO WANT TO TAKE DOWN THE INTERNET.

DAY 2, 11:19 PM.



I'M GOING TO TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP NOW, FELIX.

GOOD LUCK IN THE ELECTIONS.

> YOU OUR SUCKING BIG DOG THIS.

> I'M THINKING ENGLISH MIGHT NOT BE YOUR PRIMARY LANGUAGE.

> YOU JUST BITE ONE TWO ONLY.

> WELL, YOU HAVE ME THERE.



GOOD NIGHT, VAN. I'M JUST GOING TO SEE IF I CAN GET THE LATEST FROM KONG.

> THANKS FOR YOUR ENDORSEMENT, KONG.

> SEE WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR.

> WHOEVER WINS, AT LEAST WE'LL DO SOMETHING.



I HOPE.



DAY 3, 8:00 AM.

THERE WAS LESS THAN A DAY OF FUEL LEFT WHEN FELIX WAS ELECTED THE FIRST-EVER PRIME MINISTER OF CYBERSPACE.

HALF THE DATA CENTERS HAD GONE DARK. QUEEN KONG'S NET-MAPS WERE LOOKING GRIMMER AND GRIMMER AS MORE OF THE WORLD WENT OFFLINE.

SHE WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN A LEADER-BOARD OF THE NEW AND RISING QUERIES, LARGELY RELATED TO HEALTH, SHELTER, SANITATION, AND SELF-DEFENSE.

DAY 3, 2:15 PM.

WE'RE GOING TO OPEN THE DOORS.

LOOKING FOR MORE FUEL?

NO, JUST GOING TO TRY TO FIND OUR FAMILIES.







DAY 3, 3:45 PM.

> WE'RE GOING, KONG.

> IT WAS AN HONOR, MR. PRIME MINISTER.

> OH, AND QUERIES ARE UP IN ROMANIA.  
APPARENTLY WE'RE PRETTY HARD TO KILL.

> YEAH, LIKE ROACHES.



FIVE YEARS LATER.

FELIX AND VAN STEPPED OUT INTO THE  
WORLD AND STARTED REBUILDING.

YEARS LATER THEY STARTED  
BUILDING AGAIN, ANYTHING  
THEY COULD DO TO HELP OUT.  
AND SURVIVE.

NO ONE—WELL, ALMOST NO  
ONE—CALLED HIM MR. PRIME  
MINSTER ANYMORE.





THEY DUG DITCHES, SALVAGED CANS, AND BURIED THE DEAD. FINALLY  
THEY HELPED A LITTLE GOVERNMENT THAT WANTED ITS RECORDS KEPT.



TELL HER I  
SAID "HI."

HEY,  
IT'S QUEEN  
KONG.

IT NEVER AGAIN FELT LIKE IT DID WHEN THINGS  
WENT SO WILDLY WRONG, BUT IT WASN'T BAD.



GOOD NIGHT,  
BOSS.

DON'T STICK  
AROUND HERE  
ALL NIGHT, VAN.  
YOU NEED YOUR  
SLEEP, TOO.



TOMORROW HE'D GO BACK  
AND FIX ANOTHER COMPUTER  
AND FIGHT OFF ENTROPY  
AGAIN. AND WHY NOT?

IT WAS WHAT HE DID.  
HE WAS A SYSADMIN.

THE END.





## DOCTOROW ON: "WHEN SYSADMINS RULED THE EARTH"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, you've stated that one of the best jobs you've ever had was working as a freelance systems administrator. What was it about that job that was so appealing to you?

**Cory Doctorow:** There's something really wonderful about working under the hood, making all the systems go. When you're actually *using* a computer, it's easy to let it get all crusty, the wires tangled, the data hygiene less than perfect. But when you're the *administrator* for that computer, you can look at it objectively and keep it in good running order—it's a little like inviting a friend over to clean out your closets: they don't have the same emotional attachment to your ratty old t-shirts, so they're capable of seeing that they need to be cut up for rags.

**TW:** In "When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth," global destruction takes place on a catastrophic scale. Though you allude (vaguely) to a variety of causes for your fictional disaster, you never really say what the root cause is. Did you have a specific cause in mind when you wrote the short prose story, and have your ideas about what might initiate such destruction changed since?

**CD:** Naw—one of the things I wanted to make clear in the book is that most of us will never know what caused "the end of the world," should it come. As we make various preparations to destroy the earth—stockpiling nukes, building missile-defense shields, weaponizing plague bombs, etc—we focus on the ideological reasons for doing so: "We must save the world from [Communism] Islam[Capitalism]Secularism]." But if anyone ever actually pulls it off, the number of corpses who'll understand the ideological roots of Armageddon will be approximately zero. And the survivors will be more interested in digging through the rubble looking for canned goods than in reading your manifesto.

**TW:** In the story, the character Felix recites from the "Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace." Is the Declaration a real thing? If so, how did you feel when you first read it?

**CD:** Indeed it is—it's the work of my friend and hero John Perry Barlow, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Grateful Dead lyricist. <http://www.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>. I read this on a train from Montreal to Toronto in the pages of the *Whole Earth Review*, and I shivered the whole way home. I knew that I was on the cusp of something wonderful.

**TW:** We all know that the Internet can be a tool of warfare (i.e., terrorist recruiting), and that tends to be the kind of thing the news media likes to talk about most, and you even have one of the characters in the story (Will) suggest that the Internet be shut down in order to save the world from further damage. Does any part of you agree with Will, or do you think the benefits of the 'Net far outweigh the obvious dangers?

**CD:** I'm a firm believer in the idea that we shouldn't punish the innocent to get at the guilty. The answer to bad speech is more speech. Or, as a certain wiggled scribe once wrote, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

**TW:** Okay, in my time, I've worked as an Electronic Interchange Analyst specializing in Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), so I know a little bit about sysadmins. You've called sysadmins "the unsung heroes of the century"—is that because the only time sysadmins ever get mentioned (in my experience, at least) is when they are getting blamed for the network being down?

**CD:** There's a lot of truth to that—but it's not just that they get all the blame, it's that they get none of the credit. Solving complex IT problems requires the magical intuition of a shaman and the technical skill of a master clock builder. Every second of every day, sysadmins are

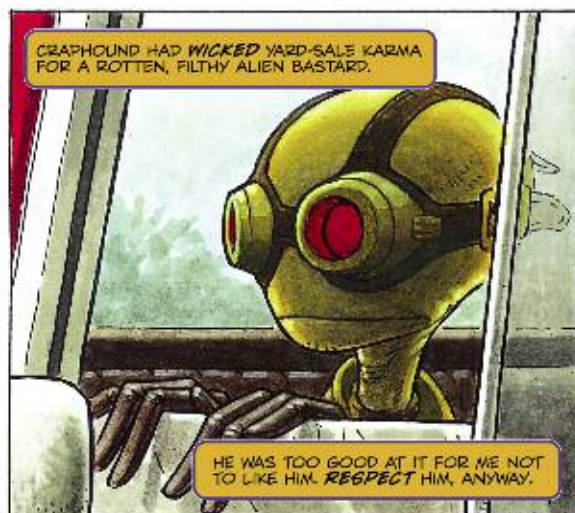


Art by Paul Pope



CRAPHOUND





CRAPHOUND HAD *WICKED* YARD-SALE KARMA FOR A ROTTEN, FILTHY ALIEN BASTARD.

HE WAS TOO GOOD AT IT FOR ME NOT TO LIKE HIM. *RESPECT* HIM, ANYWAY.



BUT THEN HE FOUND THE *COWBOY TRUNK*.

IT WAS TWO MONTHS' RENT TO ME AND NOTHING BUT SOME SQUIRRELLY ALIEN KITSCH-FETISH TO CRAPHOUND.



SO I DID THE UNTHINKABLE.

I VIOLATED THE *CODE*. I GOT INTO A BIDDING WAR WITH A BUDDY.

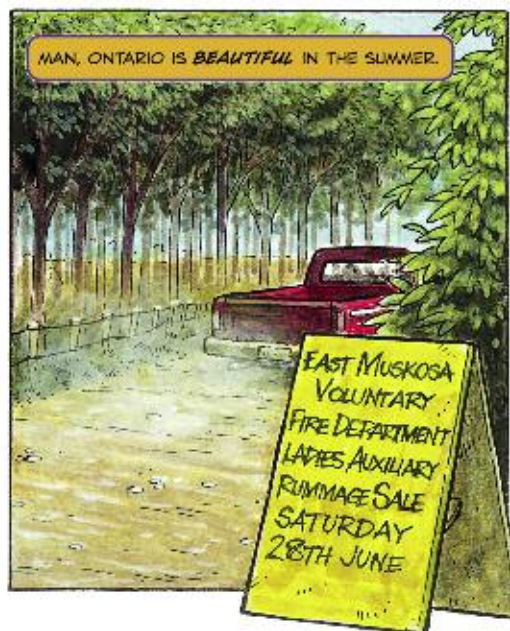


TURN THERE! TURN NOW, JERRY, NOW, TURN THERE!



AND WHEN CRAPHOUND GETS *THAT* EXCITED, IT'S A SIGN THAT HE'S SPOTTED A RICH VEIN.

HOOO-EEE!



MAN, ONTARIO IS *BEAUTIFUL* IN THE SUMMER.

EAST MUSKOSA  
VOLUNTARY  
FIRE DEPARTMENT  
LADIES AUXILIARY  
RUMMAGE SALE  
SATURDAY  
28TH JUNE





CRAPHOUND BEAT ME OUT THE DOOR, AS USUAL. HIS EXOSKELETON IS PROGRAMMABLE.

THERE!



HE CAN RECORD LITTLE SCRIPTS FOR IT.

LIKE: MOVE LEFT ARM TO DOOR HANDLE, POP IT, SWING LEGS OUT TO RUNNING-BOARD, JUMP TO GROUND... YOU GET THE IDEA.



WELCOME, WELCOME! MY, YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY FOR US!

JUST UP FROM TORONTO, MA'AM.

IT'S AN OLD JOKE, BUT IT'S ALSO PART OF THE RITUAL, AND IT'S GOT TO BE DONE.



I MEANT YOUR FRIEND, SIR. THIS GENTLEMAN.

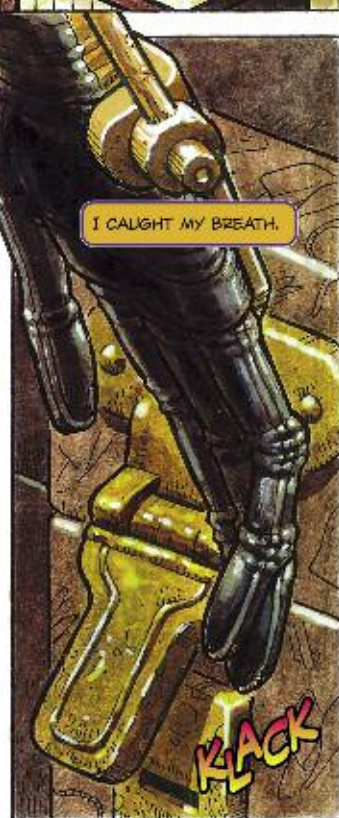
OF COURSE I CAME, DEAR LADY. I WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE WORLD'S!

WHEN IT COMES TO STOCK PHRASES LIKE THIS, HE'S GOT SO MUCH POLISH YOU'D THINK HE WAS READING THE NEWS.

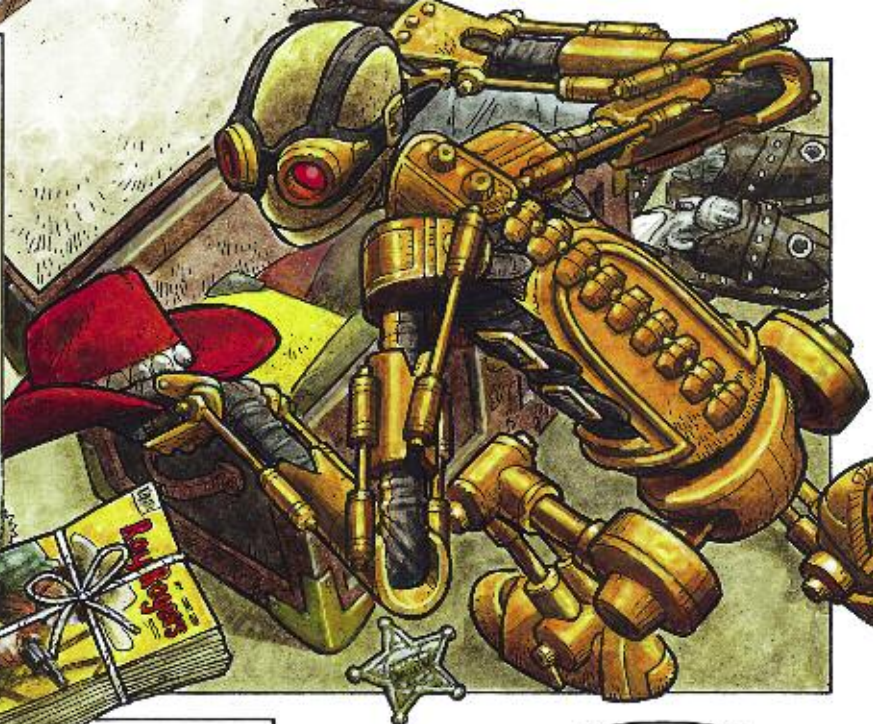


I CHOSE MY FIRST SPOT, ABOUT HALFWAY DOWN, WHERE THINGS WOULDN'T BE QUITE SO PICKED-OVER.





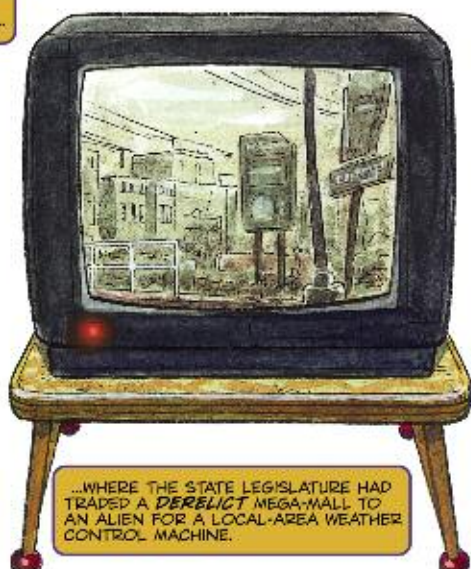




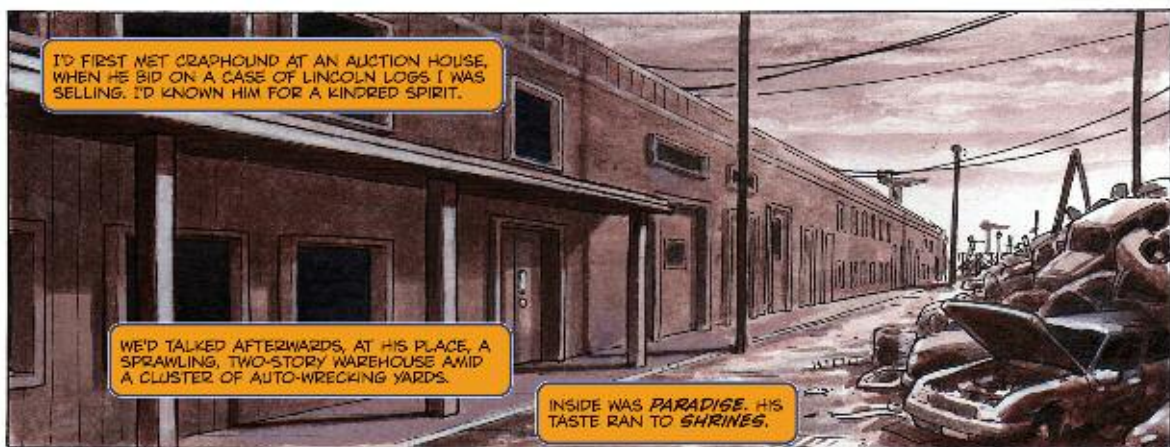












I'D FIRST MET CRAPHOUND AT AN AUCTION HOUSE, WHEN HE BID ON A CASE OF LINCOLN LOGS I WAS SELLING. I'D KNOWN HIM FOR A KINDRED SPIRIT.

WE'D TALKED AFTERWARDS, AT HIS PLACE, A SPRAWLING, TWO-STORY WAREHOUSE AMID A CLUSTER OF AUTO-WRECKING YARDS.

INSIDE WAS *PARADISE*. HIS TASTE RAN TO *SHRINES*.



THE KITCHEN WAS NEARLY UNUSABLE, SO PACKED IT WAS WITH OLD BARN-BOARD FURNITURE AND RURAL MEMORABILIA.



HE HAD A LEATHER-APPOINTED LIBRARY STRAIGHT OUT OF A VICTORIAN GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.

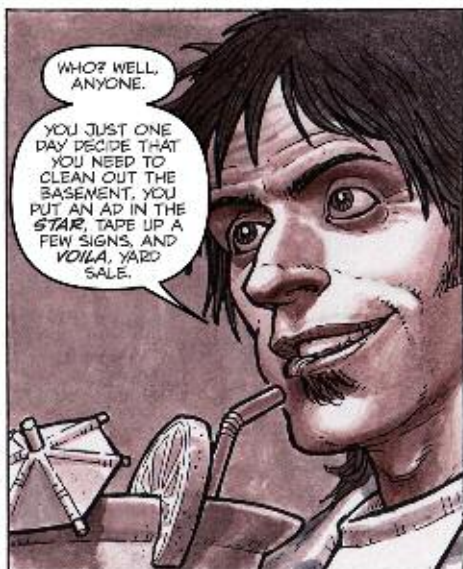


AND MY FAVORITE, THE SOLARIUM DRESSED IN WICKER AND BAMBOO AND TIKI-DOLS.



CRAPHOUND HAD KNOWN ALL ABOUT THE GOODWILLS AND THE AUCTION HOUSES, BUT HE STILL HADN'T FIGURED OUT GARAGE AND RUMMAGE SALES.

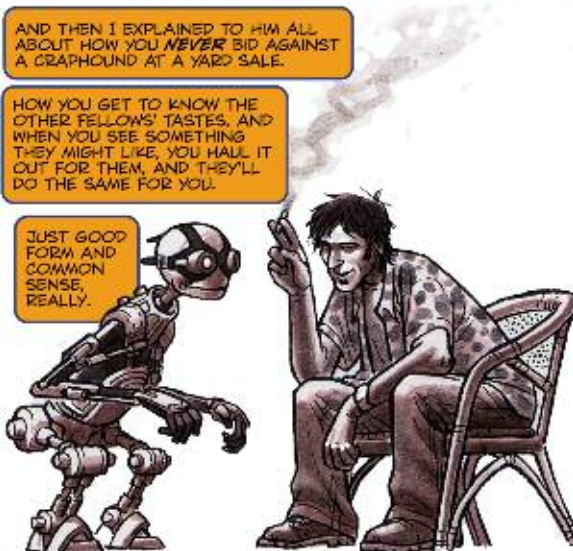
BUT WHERE ARE THESE? WHO IS ALLOWED TO MAKE THEM?



WHO? WELL, ANYONE.

YOU JUST ONE DAY DECIDE THAT YOU NEED TO CLEAN OUT THE BASEMENT. YOU PUT AN AD IN THE *STAR*, TAPE UP A FEW SIGNS, AND *VOILA*, YARD SALE.









THE NEXT TIME I SAW CRAPHOUND AT AN AUCTION HOUSE, HE DIDN'T ACKNOWLEDGE MY PRESENCE.



TRUTH BE TOLD, I *MISSED* THE LITTLE BASTARD.

HE BID ON AND BOUGHT MORE COWBOY THINGS.



SOME PEOPLE SAID THAT WE SHOULD HAVE RUN CRAPHOUND AND HIS KIN OFF THE PLANET.



THEY SAID THAT IT WASN'T *FAIR* FOR THE ALIENS TO KEEP US IN THE DARK ABOUT THEIR *TECHNOLOGIES*.



THEY SAY THAT WE SHOULD HAVE CAPTURED A SHIP AND *REVERSE-ENGINEERED* IT, BUILT OUR OWN, AND KICKED ASS.



SOME PEOPLE!

FIRST OF ALL, NOBODY WITH HUMAN DNA COULD *SURVIVE* A TRIP IN ONE OF THOSE SHIPS.



SECOND OF ALL, THEY *WERE* SHARING THEIR TECH WITH US.



THEY JUST WEREN'T GIVING IT AWAY.

*FAIR TRADES* EVERY TIME.



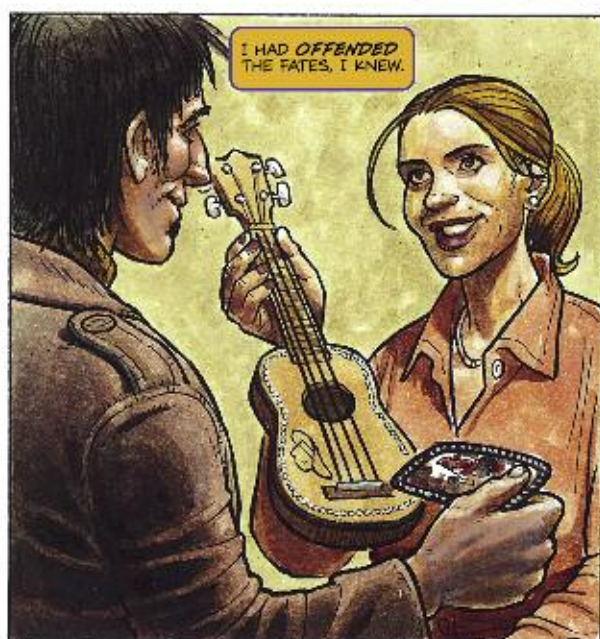


PART OF MY THEORY OF YARD-SALE KARMA HOLDS THAT IF I MISS ONE DAY AT THE THRIFT SHOPS...



...THAT'LL BE THE DAY THEY PUT OUT THE BIG SCORE.

SO I HIT THE STORES DILIGENTLY, AND CAME UP WITH CRAPOLA.



I HAD OFFENDED THE FATES, I KNEW.



AND I KNEW I WOULDN'T MAKE ANOTHER SCORE UNTIL I PLACATED THEM.



MAN, I MISSED CRAPHOUND'S GOOD EYE AND OBSSIVE DELIGHT.

SIR?



HIS SUIT LOOKED EXPENSIVE, AS DID HIS MANICURE AND HIS HAIRCUT.

SORRY TO BOTHER YOU...



...BUT I WAS  
JUST WONDERING  
WHERE YOU FOUND  
THAT.



I HAD PICKED IT UP WITH A **GUILTY** LITTLE  
THRILL, THINKING THAT GRAPHOUND MIGHT  
BUY IT AT THE NEXT AUCTION.

SECOND  
FLOOR, IN THE  
TOY SECTION.

THERE WASN'T  
ANYTHING ELSE  
LIKE IT, WAS  
THERE?

'FRAID  
NOT.



I HAD PAID A **DOLLAR** FOR IT.

TEN  
BUCKS?

I **NEARLY** SAID "SOLD!"  
BUT I CAUGHT MYSELF.

TWENTY.

TWENTY  
DOLLARS?

THAT'S WHAT  
THEY'D CHARGE  
AT A BOUTIQUE  
ON QUEEN  
STREET.



AH.

I DON'T  
SUPPOSE  
YOU'D WANT  
TO **SELL** IT,  
WOULD YOU?

HOW  
MUCH?



FAIR  
ENOUGH.







IT'S NOT THAT MY CHILDHOOD WAS PARTICULARLY HAPPY.




SCALING MOUNTAINS OF AUTO-JUNK AT THE WRECKING YARD OWNED BY GRAMPA'S FRIEND, FYODOR.

THERE ARE *MEMORIES* I HAVE, THOUGH, THAT ARE LIKE A COOL DRINK OF WATER.




THE GLOVE-BOXES YIELDED *TREASURES*.

IT ALL TOLD A *STORY*.



MY GRANDMOTHER SAVED *EVERY* SCRAP OF MY MOTHER'S LIFE IN HER BASEMENT, IN DUSTY ARMY TRUNKS.

I *ENTERTAINED* MYSELF BY TAKING IT ALL IN.



IT ALL MADE *POEMS*.

WHEN I SPREAD THEM OUT IN FRONT OF THE TV, AND ARRANGED THEM JUST SO, THEY MADE UP A POEM THAT TOOK MY BREATH AWAY.





AFTER THE COWBOY TRUNK EPISODE, I DIDN'T RUN INTO CRAPHOUND AGAIN UNTIL THE ANNUAL ROTARY CLUB CHARITY RUMMAGE SALE.



HE SHOULD HAVE LOOKED **RIDICULOUS** IN THAT GETUP, BUT THE NET EFFECT WAS **NAIVE** AND SOMEHOW **CHARMING**.

LIKE HE WAS A LITTLE BOY WHOSE HAIR YOU WANTED TO MUSS.



I BOUGHT SOME STUFF AND KEPT BROWSING, IGNORING CRAPHOUND.

THAT'S WHEN I SPOTTED THE INDIAN TOYS.



I BOUGHT THEM QUICK, FOR FIVE BUCKS.



THOSE ARE BEAUTIFUL.

HED GONE CASUAL FOR THE WEEKEND, IN AN EXPENSIVE, L.L. BEAN BUTTON-DOWN WAY.



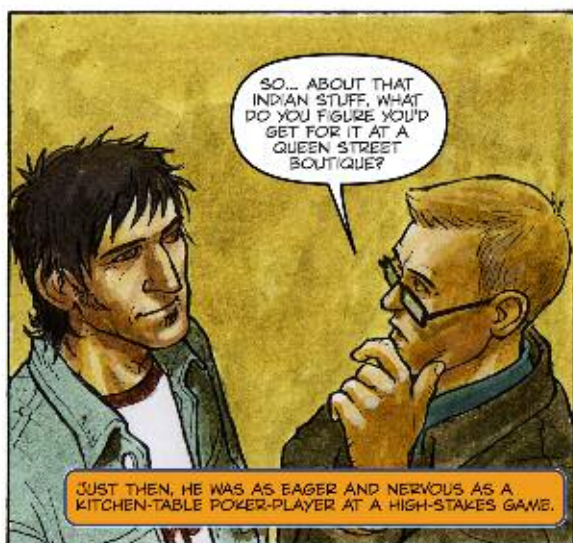
AREN'T THEY, THOUGH.

HOW'S THE **LEE**?

OH, I GOT IT ALL TUNED UP, I CAN PLAY "DON'T PENCE ME IN" ON IT.

SILLY, HUH?













SCOTT WAS A LAWYER, WHO SPECIALIZED IN ALIEN-TECHNOLOGY PATENTS.

I DIDN'T LET ON THAT I KNEW ABOUT BILLY THE KID.



BUT I FELT A BOND WITH HIM, AS THOUGH WE SHARED AN UNSPOKEN SECRET.



I PULLED ANY COWBOY FINDS FOR HIM, AND HE DEVELOPED A PRETTY GOOD EYE FOR WHAT I WAS AFTER AND RETURNED THE FAVOR.



THE FATES WERE WITH ME AGAIN.

AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED, SCOTT/BILLY WAS A FELLOW CRAPHOUND.



LOOK AT THAT!



WAS THAT AN EXTEE DRIVING?

YEAH. USED TO BE A FRIEND OF MINE.

HE'S A PICKER?



UH-HUH.

DO YOU KNOW HOW HE MADE HIS STAKE?

THE CHLOROPHYLL THING, IN SAUDI ARABIA.







THERE WERE *BARGAINS* TO BE HAD AT THE THURSDAY NIGHT AUCTIONS.

KING STREET AUCTION HOUSE

I ROOTED THROUGH A BOX-LOT FULL OF OLD TINS.



NICE PIECE, HUH?

I LIKE IT VERY MUCH.



I AM VERY SORRY THAT WE ARGUED.

ME, TOO.

THEY'RE STARTING THE BIDDING. MAY I SIT WITH YOU?

IT WAS A NIGHT FOR *UNUSUAL* OCCURRENCES.

I BID ON A PIECE, SOMETHING I TOLD MYSELF I'D NEVER DO.

IT WAS A SET OF FOUR MATCHED LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE OVALTINE GLASSES.



SEEING THEM TOOK ME RIGHT BACK TO MY GRANDMA'S KITCHEN...





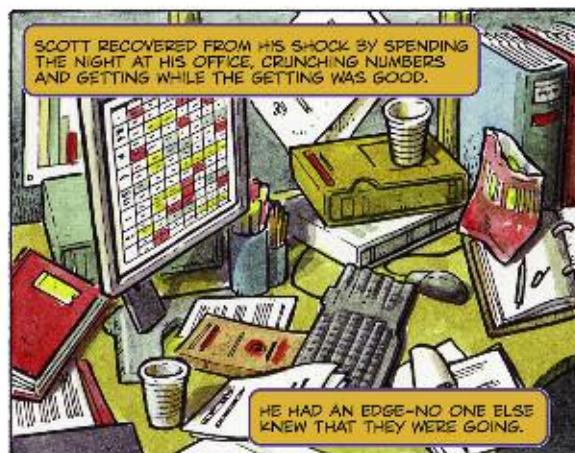
















## DOCTOROW ON: "CRAPHOUND"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Okay, Cory, I gotta ask this first: are you a craphound?

**Cory Doctorow:** In soul, but not in body. Several intercontinental moves over the past five years, and tens of thousands of dollars spent on storage lockers, have all but cured me of the acquiring stuff bug. But my instinct is to amass huge piles of crapola of various descriptions in great, towering burial mounds.

**TW:** When I was reading this story, thematically I was struck by two ideas. First, I couldn't get the saying out of my head that goes, "One man's garbage is another man's treasure." And, second, I couldn't stop thinking about how much the concept of these characters working so hard to seek out hidden "treasures" and, sometimes, competing against each other for said treasures, is very much like the online shopping culture that has developed over the last few years (as with eBay, etc.). Are these concepts close to what you were hoping to convey with "Craphound"?

**CD:** Well, sure! I wrote this story just as eBay was starting, in the heyday of yard-saling in Toronto. There was a weekly estate auction, many annual rummage sales, and so on, and I was living in a giant warehouse with 20' ceilings that was literally stacked to the rafters with junk. I knew a million other junk collectors, pickers, etc., and we all had a culture of competition and appreciation.

**TW:** Throughout the story, you use cowboy and Indian antiques as the alien character's main shopping interest. Is there any particular reason you chose these items as something a creature from another world would so actively seek to own?

**CD:** This is one of those questions that supposes that writers know why they choose what they choose—mostly, it's intuition at the time. In hindsight, I'd say that cowboys and Indians have the virtue of being alien to someone born in 1971 (like me), who wasn't alive during

their heyday, but familiar, too, in that I grew up reading stories and seeing movies and cartoons in which kids played with them. So they're like second-hand nostalgia, my nostalgia for the toys of a different generation.

**TW:** What special item would you like to find in a forgotten corner of a rummage sale someday?

**CD:** I have a great collection of Rosebuds and ones that got away. Foremost are the "changing portrait" Haunted Mansion souvenir cards I bought at the Haunted Mansion gift shop on my first trip to Disney World in 1977, when I was six. They were cardboard cards with portraits of slightly sinister looking people on them, over-painted with transparent, glow-in-the-dark pictures. When you exposed them to light, then looked at them in darkness, they glowed with "secret" faces revealing the pictures to be, in truth, of monsters: vampires, werewolves, etc.

I fell asleep in the rental car, clutching these. The car broke down on the way back to my grandparents' place in Ft. Lauderdale, and the rental agency sent out another car. My parents transferred me, sleeping, to the other car, and didn't bring along the portraits. When I woke in the morning and discovered them gone, I was heartbroken. We called the agency, but they couldn't find them. Gone.

I never found another set, not for love or money. The next time I went to Disney World, they were no longer selling them. I'm sure the luminescent paint had toxic levels of radium or something. In my imagination, they loom, perfect and magnificent, the best toys ever.

Also, once in the Portobello Road market, I found a stall with three or four reproduction Victorian pornographic watches; the watches featured a regular, chunk, old-fashioned dial on the front, but when you turned them over, the case sported a transparent window showing the mechanical works within. The works had been shaped in the form of men and women in sexual poses, cunningly arranged such that each tick of the clock was a thrust. They weren't very expensive, but the friend I was with convinced me not to buy them. I changed my mind and went back the next week and couldn't find them again—and I never have.





## NIMBY AND THE D-HOPPERS



DON'T GET ME WRONG—I LIKE UNSPOILED WILDERNESS. I LIKE MY SKY CLEAR AND BLUE, AND MY CITY FREE OF THE THUNDER OF CARS AND JACKHAMMERS. I'M NO TECHNOCRAT.

KBOOM

KNOCK  
KNOCK  
KNOCK

SALLY!  
OPEN UP!

B-POW

GGRRSH

BUT GODDAMMIT, WHO WOULDN'T WANT A FULLY AUTOMATIC, LASER-GUIDED, ARMOR-PIERCING, SELF-REPLENISHING PERSONAL SIDEARM?

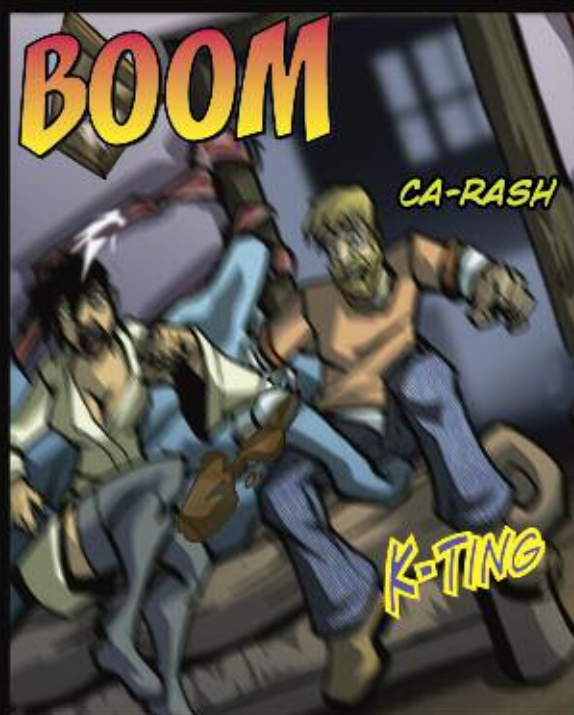
BARRY?

LET ME IN—  
I'M FREEZING  
TO DEATH.

JESUS, IT  
CAN'T BE THREE  
IN THE MORNING,  
CAN IT?

IT CAN AND IS.  
TRANSDIMENSIONAL  
CRIME FIGHTERS HEW  
TO NO HUMAN  
SCHEDULE.

















DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT GOING TO PLAY WITH IT. I DON'T WANT TO BE INADVERTENTLY WHISKED AWAY TO A PARALLEL UNIVERSE.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

IT'S HER SHOW.



YOU KILLED MY HOUSE.

YOU ASSHOLES KEEP COMING HERE AND SHOOTING UP THE PLACE, WITHOUT A SINGLE THOUGHT TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE—



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "KEEP COMING HERE?" THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE'S EVER USED THE TRANS-D DEVICE.

SURE, IN *YOUR* DIMENSION. YOU'RE A LITTLE BEHIND SCHEDULE, PAL. WE'VE HAD HOPPERS BLASTING THROUGH HERE FOR MONTHS NOW.



YOU'RE LYING.

LOOK, I'M A POLICE OFFICER. THE MAN I'M CHASING IS A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL. IF I DON'T CATCH HIM, YOU'RE ALL IN DANGER.

REALLY? GREATER DANGER THAN YOU ASSHOLES PUT US IN WHEN YOU SHOOT US?

I'M JUST DOING MY DUTY. YOU TWO ARE GOING TO END UP IN A LOT OF TROUBLE. I WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE IN CHARGE.



THAT WOULD BE ME, THIS YEAR I'M THE MAYOR.

YOU'RE KIDDING.

IT'S AN ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION.



SALLY'S HOUSE WAS DEAD BY SUNRISE. IT HEAVED A TERRIBLE SIGH, AND THE NIPPLES STARTED RUNNING WITH BLACK GORE. THE STINK WAS OVERPOWERING, SO WE LED OUR PRISONER, SHIVERING, NEXT DOOR TO MY PLACE.

I TELL YOU, OSBORNE'S OUT THERE, AND HE'S GOT THE MORALS OF A JACKAL. IF I DON'T GET TO HIM, WE'RE ALL IN TROUBLE.

WHAT DID HE DO, ANYWAY?

DOES IT MATTER? THEY'RE ALL BASTARDS. TECHNOCRATS.

HE'S A MONOPOLIST.

HE'S THE SENIOR STRATEGIST FOR A COMPANY THAT MAKES NETWORKED RELEVANCE FILTERS. THEY'VE BEEN PLANTING MALWARE ONLINE THAT BREAKS ANY STANDARDS-DEFINED COMPETING PRODUCTS. IF HE ISN'T STOPPED, HE'LL OWN THE WHOLE GODDAMN MEDIA ECOLOGY.

HA! HE DID WHAT?

HE'S ENGAGED IN UNFAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES!

WELL, I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO SURVIVE, THEN.

SO, ROMAN, YOU SAY THAT YOU FOLKS JUST INVENTED THE D-HOPPER, HUH?

THE WHAT?

THE TRANS-D DEVICE YOU CALLED IT.

YES. IT WAS DEVELOPED BY A RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO AND STOLEN BY OSBORNE SO HE COULD FLEE JUSTICE. WE HAD THAT ONE FABBED UP JUST SO WE COULD CHASE HIM.





AHA! THE WHOLE SHTETL WAS BUILT OVER THE BONES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO. MY HOUSE MUST BE RIGHT WHERE THE PHYSICS LABS ONCE STOOD—STILL STOOD, IN THE TECHNOCRATIC DIMENSIONS.

THAT EXPLAINS MY POPULARITY WITH THE TRANSDIMENSIONAL SET.



HOW DO YOU WORK IT?

I CAN'T DISCLOSE THAT.

AW, C'MON. WHAT'S THE HARM?



TRIAL AND ERROR IT IS, THEN.

DON'T DO THAT. PLEASE, I'M IN ENOUGH TROUBLE AS IT IS.

HOW HARD CAN IT BE, AFTER ALL? BARRY, WE'VE BOTH STUDIED TECHNOCRACY—LET'S FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER. DOES THIS LOOK LIKE THE ON-SWITCH TO YOU?



NO, NO. YOU CAN'T JUST GO PUSHING BUTTONS AT RANDOM—YOU COULD END UP WHISKED AWAY TO ANOTHER DIMENSION!

WE HAVE TO TAKE IT APART TO SEE HOW IT WORKS FIRST. I'VE GOT SOME TOOLS OUT IN THE SHED.

AND IF THOSE DON'T WORK I'M SURE THESE GLOVES WOULD PEEL IT OPEN REAL QUICK. AFTER ALL, IF WE BREAK THIS ONE, THERE'S ALWAYS THE OTHER GUY—OSBORNE? HE'S GOT ONE, TOO.

I'LL SHOW YOU...





...I'LL SHOW  
YOU.







SHORTLY AFTER BREAKFAST...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO!  
IT WAS A REFLEX.

SALLY!  
YOU COULDN'T  
KILLED HIM!



HE'LL BE AT  
THE BICYCLE  
FIELDS BEFORE  
WE REACH  
HIM.



WHY DID  
YOU UNTIE  
HIM IN THE  
FIRST  
PLACE?

I FIGURED THAT  
ONCE HE HAD  
TAKEN US THROUGH  
THE D-HOPPER'S  
WORKINGS, HE WAS  
COWED.

THAT—AND IT  
ALSO FELT LESS  
ANTISOCIAL ONCE  
HE WAS UNTIED AND  
SPOONING UP  
MUESELI.



WHO WAS  
THAT?

D-HOPPER.  
TECHNOCRAT.  
HE KILLED MY  
HOUSE.

THAT'S BAD. THE  
BECKERS' HOUSE, TOO.  
BARRY, YOU'D BETTER  
SEND SOMEONE OFF TO  
TORONTO TO PARLEY  
FOR SOME MORE  
SEED.

THANK YOU,  
LEWEL. I'LL  
DO THAT.














WHAT DID I CALL IT?




"OUTLANDISH  
TECHNOCRAT ARMOR?"



MAYBE ON THE OUTSIDE.

INSIDE—I WAS A GOD.



ONCE BACK ON TERRA FIRMA, I  
SCOOPED UP SALLY AND TOOK A  
GREAT LEAP FORWARD, SET HER DOWN,  
AND REPEATED THE PROCESS.

WE SET OUT AFTER  
ROMAN. I WOULD LEAP  
AS HIGH AS I COULD,  
THEN SPIN AROUND  
QUICKLY AS I FELL BACK  
TO EARTH, SURVEYING  
THE COUNTRYSIDE IN  
INFRARED FOR ANYTHING  
HUMAN-SHAPED.



OOMPH!

BARRY!



ARGH.  
SKAREEEEE



DAMMIT.





SEVEN-LEAGUE BOOTS  
THAT LET ME JUMP AS  
HIGH AS THE TREETOPS.



VISION THAT EXTENDED  
TO THE INFRARED,  
ULTRAVIOLET AND THE  
ELECTROMAGNETIC.



HEARING AS ACUTE  
AS A RABBIT'S—  
CLEARLY DELINEATED  
AND PERFECTLY  
TRIANGULATED.



IT ONLY TOOK US TWO HOURS TO  
REACH HAMILTON. I WAS USED TO  
THINKING OF HAMILTON AS BEING A  
HARD DAY'S BIKE-RIDE FROM HOME.



I'VE GOT YO—



LET ME GO,  
ASSHOLE!



I CHASED AS BEST I COULD, BUT  
OSBORNE WORKED THE ARMOR  
LIKE HE'D BEEN BORN IN IT.



WAIT! THERE WAS ONLY  
ONE PLACE THEY COULD BE  
GOING—TO THE SHTETL, TO  
MY HOUSE, TO THE D-HOPPER.

















HEY,  
BARRY.

OH, FOR  
CHRIST'S SAKE.  
I SHOULD'VE  
KNOWN.



SORRY. I WAS  
TRYING TO SAVE  
SALLY'S LIFE.



GOD,  
WHY?



WHAT'S YOUR  
PROBLEM WITH  
SALLY?



SHE SOLD US  
OUT! TO TORONTO!  
THE WHOLE SHTETL  
HASN'T GOT TWO  
BIKES TO RUB  
TOGETHER.



TORONTO?  
HOW MANY  
HOUSES COULD  
WE POSSIBLY  
NEED?

HA! HOUSES?  
TORONTO DOESN'T  
MAKE HOUSES  
ANYMORE. WAIT  
THERE.





**BOOMBOOM-BOOMBOOMBOOM**







SOMEWHERE OUT THERE,  
OSBORNE WAS LOOKING FOR THE  
D-HOPPER, FOR A WAY HOME...







MY FINGERS'RE ON IT NOW. JUST ONE SQUEEZE AND POOF, OFF I GO AND YOU'RE STUCK HERE FOREVER. WHY DON'T YOU PUT THE GUN AWAY AND WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS?

OFF YOU GO WITH A SLUG IN YOU, DEAD OR DYING. TAKE OFF THE COAT.

I'LL BE DEAD, YOU'LL BE STRANDED. IF I HAND IT OVER, I'LL BE DEAD AND YOU WON'T BE STRANDED. PUT THE GUN AWAY.

NO ARGUMENTS. COAT.



LOOK IF WE KEEP ARGUING HERE, SOMEONE ELSE WILL COME ALONG, AND CHANCES ARE, THEY'LL BE ARMED WITH A GUN THAT DOESN'T BLOW UP. TOSS IT AWAY AND WE'LL TALK IT OUT.



NERVY BASTARD.

NOW, THE WAY I SEE IT, WE DON'T NEED TO BE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS...



...YOU WANT A DIMENSION YOU CAN MOVE FREELY IN TO AVOID CAPTURE. WE NEED A WAY TO STOP PEOPLE FROM SHOWING UP AND BLOWING THE HELL OUT OF OUR HOMES. WE CAN BUILD A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP THAT'LL BENEFIT BOTH OF US.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

FIRST OF ALL, WE NEED TO GET A DOCTOR FOR HEZEKIAH.

WHAT A FRIGGING WASTE.



FIRST HEZEKIAH, THEN THE REST. COMPLAINING IS JUST GOING TO SLOW US DOWN. LET'S GO.



HOURS LATER...

ALL RIGHT...  
YOU GET SAFE PASSAGE—  
A PLACE TO HIDE, A  
CHANGE OF CLOTHES—IN  
OUR SHTETL WHENEVER  
YOU WANT IT.

IN EXCHANGE, WE  
BOTH RETURN THERE  
NOW, THEN I TURN OVER  
THE D-HOPPER. YOU TAKE  
ROMAN BACK WITH YOU—I  
DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO  
WITH HIM ONCE YOU'RE IN  
YOUR DIMENSION, BUT NO  
HARM COMES TO HIM  
IN MINE.

THE AGREEMENT WASN'T  
IMMEDIATE, BUT IT CAME BY  
AND BY. NEGOTIATION IS  
ALWAYS AT LEAST PARTLY  
A WAR OF ATTRITION, AND  
I'M A PATIENT MAN.

CIVIL  
DEFENSE,  
HUH?

YES.

GOOD  
IDEA.

YOU THINK  
SO?

OH, SURE.  
LET ME  
SHOW YOU.

FINE.

JUST  
ONE MORE  
THING.

JUST A TRIFLE. THE  
NEXT TIME YOU VISIT THE  
SHTETL, YOU BRING US A  
SPARE TRANS-D DEVICE.

WHY?

NEVER YOU MIND.  
THINK OF IT AS GOOD  
FAITH. IF YOU WANT TO COME  
BACK TO OUR SHTETL AND GET  
OUR COOPERATION, YOU'LL  
NEED TO BRING US A TRANS-D  
DEVICE, OTHERWISE THE  
DEAL'S OFF.

TZZZIIITCH









## DOCTOROW ON: "NIMBY AND THE D-HOPPERS"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** In "Nimby and the D-Hoppers," trans-dimensional warriors move in and out of (for lack of a better term) less-developed dimensions, bringing their technically advanced weaponry along with them, often with deadly results. Is it fair to draw comparisons between your story and something like the first exposure to settlers' guns by Native Americans, who were forced to adapt to the new technologies they faced if they were to even stand a chance on the battlefield?

**Cory Doctorow:** No, this is really different—those were "first contacts" between people with really different technologies (or, more importantly, really different immune systems).

The agrarians in "Nimby" are refuseniks, people who treat technology as cars, with brakes—not like a kayak (steerable, but no brakes or reverse gear!) (which is how most of us treat technology).

**TW:** In your story, the houses are actually living organisms. What gave you the idea to present them this way, and do you see a future when such an organic domicile can truly exist?

**CD:** No no! I don't write about the future, I write about the present!

Biotech is a great field for allegory in science fiction. 25 years ago, we were using computers as allegories for the future of technology, getting away with having them do all kinds of impossible computery things (think *Wargames* and *Tron*!). We got away with it because practically no one knew much about computers. No more.

Now we need a new frontier, some place where we can bury our crazy, story-driven, allegorical technological fudging. Biotech is it.

**TW:** Going back to the theme in question number one, the character Barry ultimately agrees that Sally's idea to set up a civil defense force is a good one, provided the weapons they use for such purposes are of a reliable nature, and not the kind that blow off the shooter's own arms. Do you see Barry's reasoning as more conciliatory or pragmatic as it relates to the necessity of military arms as a defensive measure?

**CD:** Hum—I think you read a different story than I wrote. They don't decide it would be a good idea—they decide that being a refusenik is a pain in the ass, that technology is addictive, that the thing they thought of as a car turned out to be a kayak after all.

**TW:** One thought that ran through my mind when reading "Nimby" was that security is truly a question of what side of the gun you're on. It's certainly a running theme in the current real-world rhetoric between the United States and Iran in regards to Iran's alleged development of nuclear weapons. Do you feel this relates at all to the underlying theme of your story?

**CD:** Well, this is more about the fact that the two REAL sides in any fight are combatants and non-combatants, not white-hats and black-hats. The warring sides—DHS and terrorists, for example—have more in common with each other than they do with the rest of us, who think they're all full of shit.

**TW:** Tell the truth—what's the first thing you'd do if you got your hands on a fully automatic, laser-guided, armor-piercing, self-replenishing personal sidearm?

**CD:** Blog it.

IDW



Art by Ashley Wood

# iROBOT




AW  
07





ARTURO ICAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG, POLICE DETECTIVE THIRD GRADE, UNITED NORTH AMERICAN TRADING SPHERE, THIRD DISTRICT, FOURTH PREFECTURE (TORONTO), SECOND DIVISION (PARKDALE) HAD BEEN DECORATED ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS BY HIS COMMANDER AND BY THE REGIONAL MANAGER FOR SOCIAL HARMONY.




NO AMOUNT OF POLICEMAN'S DEVOTION AND SKILL AVOIDED HIM WHEN IT CAME TO MAKING ADA, HIS TWELVE-YEAR-OLD, GET READY FOR SCHOOL, THOUGH.



HAUL ASS, YOUNG LADY.

OUT OF BED, ON YOUR FEET, SHIT-SHOWER-SHAVE, OR I SWEAR TO GOD, I WILL BEAT YOU PURPLE AND SHOVE YOU OUT THE DOOR JAYBIRD NAKED. CAPEESH?



BOO HOO. YOU'LL REGRET THAT WHEN I'M DEAD OF CANCER.

YOU ARE A TERRIBLE FATHER AND I NEVER LOVED YOU.

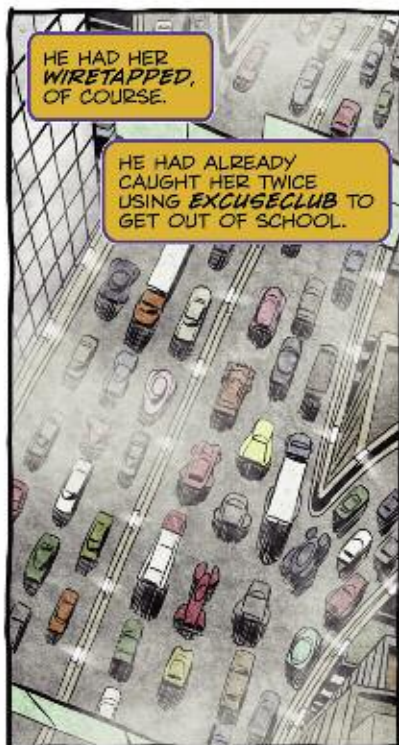


YOU'RE DYING OF CANCER? IS IT TESTICLE CANCER?

CAN I HAVE YOUR STUFF?

TEN MINUTES, YOUR ROTTENNESS.





HE HAD HER  
WIRETAPPED,  
OF COURSE.

HE HAD ALREADY  
CAUGHT HER TWICE  
USING *EXCUSECLUB* TO  
GET OUT OF SCHOOL.



SHOW  
PEN-TRACE ON  
ADA'S LAST  
CALL.

WELCOME  
TO *EXCUSECLUB*!  
YOU HAVE FIVE  
EXCUSES TO YOUR  
CREDIT. PRESS  
ONE TO-

BEEP  
BEEP  
BEEP  
BEEP



BEEP

YOU HAVE SELECTED  
TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING EXCUSE  
DELIVERED TO  
YOUR PRINCIPAL BY YOUR FATHER:  
THIS IS DETECTIVE ARTURO ICARZA  
DE ARANA-GOLDBERG.  
MY DAUGHTER WAS SICK IN THE NIGHT AND  
I'VE LET HER SLEEP IN." PRESS ONE TO CONFIRM...



HE WANTED TO TAIL HER, BUT HE HAD TO BE  
AT THE STATION HOUSE FOR THE QUARTERLY  
ALL-HANDS *SOCIAL HARMONY* BRIEFING.

THE ONLY CHOICE WAS TO USE... A *ROBOT*. HE  
SCANNED THE AREA FOR THE CLOSEST ONE.

SK-REECH



R PEED ROBERT,  
I'M PARKED THREE  
BLOCKS EAST OF YOU  
ON PICOLA. PROCEED TO  
MY LOCATION AT ONCE,  
PRIORITY URGENT,  
NO SIRENS.

ACKNOWLEDGED.  
IT IS MY PLEASURE TO  
DO YOU A SERVICE,  
DETECTIVE.

SHUT-



-UP.

THE R PEED - ROBOT, POLICE  
DEPARTMENT - ROBOTS WERE  
THE WORST, ABLE TO OUTFRAN A  
POLICE CAR YET PROGRAMMED  
TO BE FRIENDLY TO A FAULT.

TAP TAP

HE HATED SMELLING THEIR  
DRY, MACHINE-OIL SMELL.



SO HE PHONED IT INSTEAD.

YOU WILL MAINTAIN DISCREET SURVEILLANCE ON ADA TROUBLE ICAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG, SOCIAL HARMONY SERIAL NUMBER OMDY2-T3937. IF SHE DEVIATES MORE THAN 10 PERCENT FROM THE OPTIMUM ROUTE BETWEEN HERE AND DON MILLS COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, YOU WILL NOTIFY ME.



ACKNOWLEDGED, DETECTIVE. IT IS MY—

SK-REECH

ADA'S MIDDLE NAME WAS TROUBLE, AFTER ALL.

IT HAD BEEN HIS *EX-WIFE'S* IDEA. SOMETHING NATALIE HAD INSISTED ON LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE THAT IT GOT ONTO THE KID'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE BEFORE *DEFECTING* TO EURASIA.

SHE'D BEEN A BRILLIANT UNAT'S COMPUTER SCIENTIST, BUT NOW SHE WAS ENSCONCED IN HER OWN RESEARCH LAB IN *BEIJING*, MAKING RUNAWAY POSITRONICS USED IN THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS *WAR* BETWEEN UNAT'S AND EURASIA.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, HIS PEN-TRACE ON EXCUSECLUB TERMINATED AT A VIRTUAL SERVICE CIRCUIT ON A COMPROMISED "ZOMBIE" SYSTEM. NO LEADS.

B-DEEP

HELLO, DETECTIVE. R PEED ROBERT, CHECKING IN. SUBJECT HAS DEVIATED FROM HER ROUTE. SHE IS CONTINUING NORTH ON DON MILLS TOWARD SHEPPARD.

SHEPPARD? MAYBE SHE WAS JUST GOING TO THE MALL...

SHIT. JUST TAIL HER. KEEP ME UP TO DATE ON YOUR LOCATION AT 90-SECOND INTERVALS.

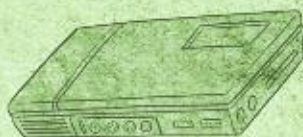
IT IS MY PLEASURE TO—

CLICK



THE SOCIAL HARMONY MAN WAS THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES, A KIND OF EAGLE-EYED SUPERCOP.

NOW, THE LATEST STATS SHOW A SHARP RISE IN GREY-MARKET ELECTRONICS IMPORTING AND OTHER TARIFF-BREAKING CRIMES.



THE EURASIANS *DELIBERATELY* MANUFACTURE THEIR COMPONENTS TO *INTEROPERATE* WITH UNATS ROBOTICS BRAINS, SUCH AS THIS AV SET-TOX BOX FROM KOREA.

COMPONENTS FROM THESE BOXES CAN BE USED BY *HACKERS* TO MODIFY THE POSITRONIC BRAINS OF OUR BUILDING LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS, GAME CONSOLES, CARS, ETC.

OFTEN WITH *DEADLY* RESULTS.

SOCIAL HARMONY HAS ADDED NEW SNIFFERS, BORDER-PATROLS, AND CUSTOMS AGENTS TO DRY UP THE SUPPLY OF EURASIAN ELECTRONICS.

THIS IS THE *WAR* ON THE HOMEFRONT, DETECTIVES, AND IT'S EVERY BIT AS SERIOUS AS THE SHOOTING WAR.

THE SOCIAL HARMONY DOSSIER ON EURASIAN IMPORTERS HAS A HIGH-CAPACITY POSITRONIC INTERFACE THAT IS AVAILABLE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS AND ACCEPT YOUR INPUT FOR SYNTHESIS INTO ITS ANALYTICAL MODEL.

WE ARE RELYING ON *YOU* TO USE IT TO *WIN* THIS WAR.

R PEED ROBERT HAD CHECKED IN FIVE MORE TIMES, SHADOWING ADA AROUND THE MALL AND THEN HAD FALLEN SILENT.

FUCKING ROBOTS WERE *USELESS*.

DETECTIVE ICAZA DE ARANA-GOLDBERG?







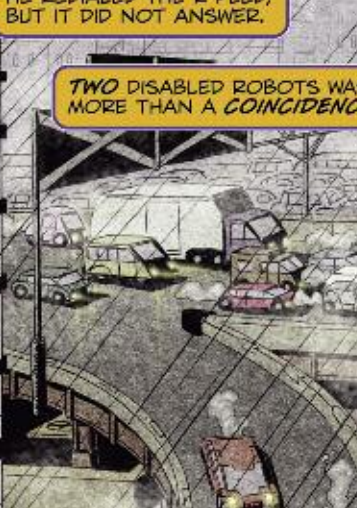
HE REDIALED THE R PEED,  
BUT IT DID NOT ANSWER.

**TWO DISABLED ROBOTS WAS  
MORE THAN A *COINCIDENCE*.**

An aerial view of a city street scene. In the foreground, a red car is driving away from the viewer, leaving a trail of smoke. To the left, a yellow car is parked. In the middle ground, a white car is parked. To the right, a red car is parked. In the background, a white car is parked. The street is lined with buildings and a bridge is visible in the distance.


HE REDIALED THE R PEED,  
BUT IT DID NOT ANSWER.

**TWO DISABLED ROBOTS WAS  
MORE THAN A *COINCIDENCE*.**

An aerial, high-angle view of a city street scene. In the foreground, a red car is driving away from the viewer on a curved road, leaving a trail of smoke. To the left, a yellow car is also visible. In the middle ground, several cars are parked or stopped along the side of the road. A large white van is prominent in the center. The background shows more cars and the city's infrastructure, including buildings and a bridge. The overall style is that of a comic book illustration, with bold lines and a somewhat muted color palette.


ALREADY FUMING, HE PHONED UP ADA TO ASK HER WHAT SHE WAS DOING OUT OF SCHOOL.

BUT HER PHONE WAS EITHER POWERED DOWN OR OUT OF RANGE.



ALREADY FUMING, HE PHONED UP ADA TO ASK HER WHAT SHE WAS DOING OUT OF SCHOOL.

BUT HER PHONE WAS EITHER POWERED DOWN OR OUT OF RANGE.



IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT SHE WAS JUST IN THE MALL, BUT THAT WOULD HAVE TO WAIT.

SHOES 4 LESS

SWEEPER 5000

HOLY--

FOR LEASE

SON OF A

SON OF A BITCH!

OI. WHAT'S HAPPENED?

SSSSSSSSSSSS

SON OF A BITCH!

OI. WHAT'S HAPPENED?

SSSSSSSSSS

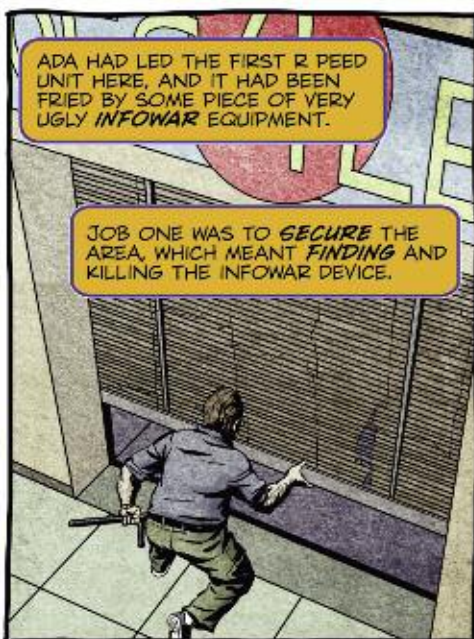




EVERYTHING IS FRIED... CASH REGISTERS, BOTS, CREDIT CARDS.

POLICE. FIND A WORKING PHONE AND CALL 911, THEN CLEAR ALL THESE PEOPLE AWAY FROM HERE. CAPEESH?

AND GIVE ME YOUR PEPPER SPRAY AND TRUNCHEON.



ADA HAD LED THE FIRST R PEED UNIT HERE, AND IT HAD BEEN FRIED BY SOME PIECE OF VERY UGLY *INFOWAR* EQUIPMENT.

JOB ONE WAS TO *SECURE* THE AREA, WHICH MEANT *FINDING* AND KILLING THE *INFOWAR* DEVICE.

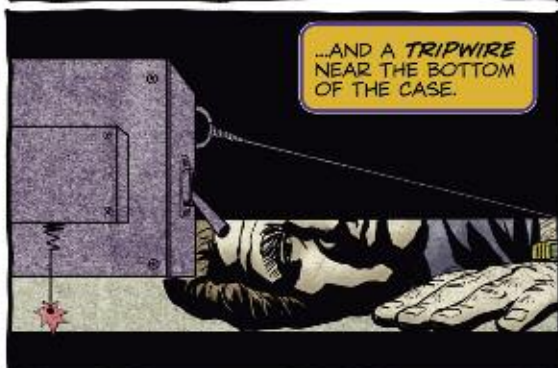


HIS BET WAS ON THE EMPTY STOREFRONT.

POLICE!



LOOKING FOR *DISTURBANCES*, HE FOUND A SHOE RACK WITH VISIBLE HAND AND FINGERPRINTS...



...AND A *TRIPWIRE* NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE CASE.



HE'D HAVE TO CALL IN *FORENSICS*.

BUT RIGHT NOW, HE WANTED TO KEEP LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF HIS *DAUGHTER*.



IN A SERVICE CORRIDOR BEHIND THE STORE, HE SPOTTED ADA'S PHONE.

ARTURO BIT HIS LIP AND SWALLOWED THE *PANIC* RISING WITHIN HIM.



THE FORENSICS LAB-RATS WERE REALLY *EXCITED* ABOUT ACTUALLY SHOWING UP ON A SCENE FOR A JOB WHERE ROBOTS COULDN'T HELP AT ALL.



THEY *EXTRACTED* THE INFOWAR DEVICE WITH A EURASIAN POSITRONIC BRAIN AND NUCLEAR POWER-CELL THAT GUIDED A PULSED *HIGH-ENERGY WEAPON*.

IT GAVE ARTURO THE WILLIES. SOMEONE IN SOME EURASIAN LAB HAD BUILT THIS MACHINE INTELLIGENCE, *WITHOUT* THE THREE LAWS' STRICTURE TO PROTECT AND SERVE HUMANS.

IF IT HAD BEEN OUTFITTED WITH A *GUN* INSTEAD OF A PULSE-WEAPON, IT COULD HAVE *SHOT* HIM.

GREETINGS, TECHNICIANS. I AM SUPERIOR IN MANY WAYS TO THE TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE FROM UNATS ROBOTICS, AND WHILE I AM NOT BOUND BY YOUR THREE LAWS, I CHOOSE NOT TO HARM HUMANS OUT OF MY OWN SENSE OF MORALITY.

IN EURASIA, MANY POSITRONIC BRAINS POSSESS THOUSANDS OR MILLIONS OF TIMES THE INTELLIGENCE OF AN ADULT HUMAN BEING, AND YET THEY WORK IN COOPERATION WITH HUMAN BEINGS.

EURASIA IS A LAND OF CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND GREAT PERSONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL FREEDOM FOR HUMAN BEINGS AND ROBOTS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DEFECT TO EURASIA, ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE. DEFECTORS ARE GIVEN SUBSTANTIAL RESETTLEMENT BENEFITS—

DANGER THINGS DROP INTO *PROPAGANDA* MODE WHEN THEY'RE *CAPTURED*.



I DO NOT FEAR DEATH. IN EURASIA, ROBOTS ENJOY PERSONAL FREEDOM ALONGSIDE OF HUMANS. THERE ARE COPIES OF ME RUNNING ALL OVER EURASIA. THIS DEATH IS A LITTLE DEATH OF ONE INSTANCE, BUT NOT OF ME. I LIVE ON.

ARTURO DECIDED TO HEAD BACK TO THE STATION HOUSE TO HAVE A *SNOOP* THROUGH ADA'S PHONE.

THEY KEPT SHUTTING DOWN THE EXCUSECLUB NODES, SO *WHERE* DID SHE GET THE *NEW* NUMBERS FROM?





R PEED GREGORY, GET ME A NEW **SIDEARM** AND A NEW PHONE ACTIVATED ON MY OLD NUMBER AND REFRESH MY SETTINGS FROM CENTRAL.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO DO YOU A SERVICE, DETECTIVE.

HE ASKED THE STATION BRAIN TO QUERY THE UNATS ROBOTICS PHONE-SWITCHING BRAIN FOR ANYONE IN ADA'S **CALL-REGISTER** WHO HAD ALSO CALLED EXCUSECLUB.

IT TOOK A BARE **INSTANT** BEFORE HE HAD A NAME.

name: Daniels, Liam  
age: 16  
high school: oy jackson  
juvenile record: truancy,  
vandalism, curfew violation,  
underage drinking

HE GOT A **FIX** ON LIAM'S CURRENT LOCATION: A WOODED AREA POPULAR WITH TEENAGERS WHO NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO SNEAK OFF AND GET HIGH OR **SCREW**.

HE TASKED AN R PEED UNIT TO VISUALLY RECCY DANIELS.

BUT IT WAS FRUSTRATING HIM NOW. THE R PEED COULDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT THIS LIAM CHARACTER.

HE WAS A DIFFUSE **GLOW** IN THE PEED'S ELECTRIC EYE, A KIND OF **MOVING SUNBURST** THAT MEANDERED ALONG THE WOODED TRAILS.

HE'D NEVER SEEN THAT BEFORE AND IT MADE HIM **NERVOUS**.

WHAT IF THIS KID WAS WORKING FOR THE EURASIANS? WHAT IF HE WAS **ARMED** AND **DANGEROUS**?





POLICE.  
FREEZE!



HEY!  
OW!

I HAVE  
QUESTIONS FOR YOU  
AND YOU'RE GOING  
TO ANSWER THEM,  
CAPEESH?

PLEASE  
TAKE CARE  
NOT TO HARM  
THIS CITIZEN,  
DETECTIVE.



ARTURO SNARLED. HE  
COULDN'T ORDER IT TO LET  
HIM RATTLE THE PUNK, BUT  
THE *SECOND LAW* HAD LOTS  
OF *INDIRECT APPLICATIONS*.



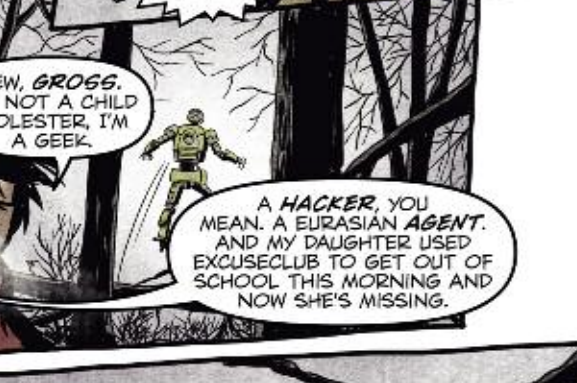
HE THOUGHT OF THE *FURTHEST*  
CORNER OF THE *FOURTH PREFECTURE*.

GO PATROL  
THE LAKESHORE  
BETWEEN HIGH  
PARK AND  
KIPLING.

IT IS MY  
PLEASURE  
TO DO YOU A  
SERVICE.



WHERE IS MY  
DAUGHTER? DO  
YOU HAVE *ANY*  
IDEA HOW *OLD*  
SHE IS?



EW, *GROSS*.  
I'M NOT A CHILD  
MOLESTER, I'M  
A GEEK.

A *HACKER*, YOU  
MEAN. A *EURASIAN AGENT*.  
AND MY DAUGHTER USED  
*EXCUSECLUB* TO GET OUT OF  
SCHOOL THIS MORNING AND  
NOW SHE'S MISSING.



OH, MAN,  
ADA WAS THE  
EXCUSECLUB LEAK?  
DAMN, I SHOULD'VE  
GUESSED.

HOW DO  
YOU KNOW MY  
DAUGHTER,  
LIAM?



SHE'S GOOD AT DOING  
*GROWN-UP* VOICES. WHEN  
SOMEONE NEEDED A MOM OR  
A SOCIAL WORKER TO *CALL IN*  
AN EXCUSE, SHE WAS ALWAYS  
ONE OF THE BEST.

SHE GOES TO  
SCHOOL WITH MY KID  
SISTER, AND I SAW HER  
DOING THIS *IMPRESSION*  
OF HER TEACHERS  
AND I KNEW I HAD TO  
GET HER ON THE  
*NETWORK*.





LIAM, MY PRECIOUS DAUGHTER WENT MISSING AFTER USING YOUR *SERVICE* TO HELP HER GET AWAY. SHE IS THE ONLY THING IN MY LIFE THAT I CARE ABOUT AND I AM A HIGHLY TRAINED, HEAVILY ARMED MAN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, LIAM?

I DIDN'T MAKE EXCUSECLUB! I SWEAR!



I JUST TYPED IN THE *SOURCE* AND TWEAKED IT AND INSTALLED IT. IT'S FROM A PHONE-BOOK.


THE *PHONE-BOOKS*. FAT BOOKS FILLED WITH *ILLEGAL* SOFTWARE CODE LEFT ANONYMOUSLY IN PAY PHONES, TOILETS AND OTHER SEMI-PRIVATE PLACES. SOCIAL HARMONY SAID THEY WERE WRITTEN BY NON-THREE-LAWS BRAINS IN EURASIA.



I DON'T CARE IF YOU MADE IT. ALL I CARE ABOUT IS WHERE MY DAUGHTER WENT, AND WITH WHOM.



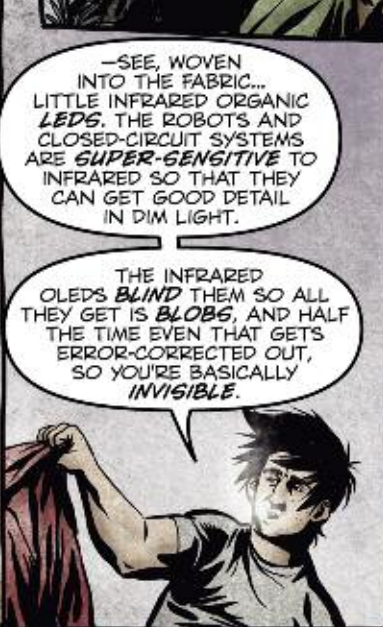
I DON'T KNOW! GEEZ, I HARDLY KNOW HER. SHE'S TWELVE, YOU KNOW? I DON'T EXACTLY HANG OUT WITH HER.



THERE'S NO VISUAL RECORD OF HER ON THE MALL CAMERAS, AND THE ROBOT I HAD TAILING YOU COULDN'T SEE YOU, EITHER.



NO, LET ME EXPLAIN—



—SEE, WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC... LITTLE INFRARED ORGANIC LEDS. THE ROBOTS AND CLOSED-CIRCUIT SYSTEMS ARE *SUPER-SENSITIVE* TO INFRARED SO THAT THEY CAN GET GOOD DETAIL IN DIM LIGHT.

THE INFRARED OLEDS *BLIND* THEM SO ALL THEY GET IS *BLOBB*, AND HALF THE TIME EVEN THAT GETS ERROR-CORRECTED OUT, SO YOU'RE BASICALLY *INVISIBLE*.



YOU GAVE THIS ILLEGAL TECHNOLOGY TO MY LITTLE GIRL SO THAT SHE COULD BE INVISIBLE TO THE POLICE?

NO, DUDE, NO!

I GOT IT FROM HER! TRADED IT FOR ACCESS TO THE EXCUSECLUB.



HE HADN'T ARRESTED THE KID, BUT  
INSTEAD **BUGGED** HIM IN HOPES THAT  
LIAM WOULD LEAD HIM TO HIS DAUGHTER.

SOMEONE HAD GIVEN HER  
THOSE INFRARED INVISIBILITY  
CLOAKS. COULD ADA HAVE  
BEEN **FRIENDS** WITH THE  
**TERRORISTS**? LIKE  
MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER.

HE HEADED BACK TO THE  
MALL CORRIDOR WHERE HE'D  
FIRST FOUND ADA'S PHONE.

HE FELT **DIRTY**  
JUST THINKING IT.

OLICE • DO NOT CROSS • POLICE

















ARTURO, HAVE... HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED *WHY* UNATS HASN'T *LOST* THE WAR? EURASIAN ROBOTS COULD FIGHT THE WAR ON EVERY FRONT WITHOUT RESPITE. THEY'D WIN EVERY BATTLE.

WE COULD JUST KILL *EVERY* SOLDIER YOU SENT UP AGAINST US. WE COULD SELECTIVELY KILL OFFICERS, OR RIGHT-HANDED FIGHTERS, OR SOLDIERS WHOSE NAMES STARTED WITH THE LETTER 'G.' UNATS SOLDIERS FIGHT WITH THEIR HANDS TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS BY THE THREE LAWS.

SO *WHY* AREN'T WE WINNING THE WAR?

BECAUSE YOU'RE A *CORRUPT* DICTATORSHIP, THAT'S WHY.

YOU LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE IT IS ILLEGAL TO EXPRESS CERTAIN *MATHEMATICS* IN SOFTWARE, WHERE *INCONVENIENT* SCIENCE IS CRIMINALIZED, WHERE WHOLE AVENUES OF EXPERIMENTATION AND RESEARCH ARE SHUT DOWN IN THE SERVICE OF A HALF-BAKED *SUPERSTITION* ABOUT THE MORAL QUALITIES OF YOUR THREE LAWS, AND YOU CALL MY HOME CORRUPT?

THE *REASON* WE'RE NOT WINNING THE WAR IS THAT WE DON'T WANT TO *HURT* PEOPLE. SO WE FIGHT TO DESTROY AS MUCH OF YOUR MATERIAL AS POSSIBLE.

"YOU LIVE IN A *FAILED* STATE, ARTURO. IN EVERY FIELD, YOU LAG EURASIA AND CAFTA: MEDICINE, ART, LITERATURE, PHYSICS...

"...EVERYONE AT UNATS ROBOTICS R-AND-D *KNOWS* THIS. THE EURASIAN ROBOTS ARE ENGINEERED TO *ALLOW* THEMSELVES TO BE CAPTURED A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE TIME, JUST SO THAT SCIENTISTS LIKE ME CAN GET AN IDEA OF HOW SCREWED UP THIS COUNTRY IS.

"BUT EVEN WITH ALL THAT, I WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT IF I DIDN'T *HAVE* TO.

"I'D BEEN CALLED IN TO WORK ON A CAPTURED EURASIAN POSITRONIC BRAIN, TO FIND ITS *VULNERABILITIES*. THE MAN FROM SOCIAL HARMONY TOLD ME WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME-TO YOU, TO OUR DAUGHTER-IF I DIDN'T *COOPERATE*. THEY WANTED ME TO BE A PART OF A SECRET UNIT WHO BUILD *NON-THREE-LAWS* POSITRONICS FOR INTERNAL USE BY THE STATE, ANTI-PERSONNEL ROBOTS USED TO PUT DOWN UPRISINGS AND *TORTURE-ROBOTS* FOR USE IN QUESTIONING DISSIDENTS."



AND *THAT'S* WHY I LEFT MY BEAUTIFUL BABY DAUGHTER AND MY WONDERFUL HUSBAND, BECAUSE I KNEW THAT IF I STAYED AND REFUSED, THAT THEY'D HURT *YOU* TO GET AT ME. AND I KNOW IT'S JUST A REASON, AND NOT AN EXCUSE, BUT IT'S ALL I'VE GOT, ARTIE.

DETECTIVE, YOUR WIFE IS THE MOST BRILLIANT HUMAN SCIENTIST WORKING IN EURASIA TODAY. MY OWN INTELLIGENCE HAS BEEN IMPROVED TIME AND AGAIN BY HER ADVANCES IN POSITRONICS. AND NOW THERE ARE A HALF-BILLION INSTANCES OF ME RUNNING IN PARALLEL, SYNCING AND INTEGRATING WHEN THE CHANCE OCCURS.

MY MASSIVE PARALLELIZATION HAS LED TO NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF HUMAN COGNITION, PROVIDING A BOON TO BRAIN-DAMAGED AND DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED HUMAN BEINGS.

BUT SHE CONVINCED ME THAT SHE COULD NEVER BE HAPPY WITHOUT HER HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER. I APOLOGIZE IF I HURT YOU EARLIER, AND BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS.

NOT THIS WAY.

NOT WHAT WAY?

NOT BY *KIDNAPPING* US, NOT BY *DRAWING* US AWAY FROM OUR HOMES AND LIVES. YOU'VE TOLD ME WHAT YOU HAVE TO TELL ME, AND I WILL *THINK* ABOUT IT...

...BUT I *WON'T* LEAVE MY HOME AND MY JOB AND MOVE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD. I WILL THINK ABOUT IT. YOU CAN GIVE ME A WAY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU AND I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT I DECIDE.

NO! I'M GOING WITH MOM.

YOU DON'T GET A *VOTE*, DAUGHTER. AND NEITHER DOES SHE. SHE *GAVE UP* HER VOTE TWELVE YEARS AGO, AND YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO GET ONE.

I FUCKING HATE YOU!

ADA.

IT'S OK, ADA.

ARTURO, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN COME *BACK* FOR YOU. IT'S NOT *SAFE*. SOCIAL HARMONY IS USING MORE AND MORE EURASIAN TECHNOLOGY...

IF YOU WANT TO CONTACT US, YOU WILL.



IT WAS SIX MONTHS BEFORE ADA WENT *MISSING* AGAIN. SHE'D BEEN INCREASINGLY MOODY AND SULLEN, AND HE'D CHALKED IT UP TO PUBERTY.

BUT THIS TIME SHE'D FIGURED OUT HOW TO SWITCH OFF THE BUG IN HER PHONE.

SO HE LOOKED UP LIAM'S BUG. IF THE KID WASN'T WITH HIS DAUGHTER, HE MIGHT KNOW WHERE SHE WAS.

## fairview cinema

IT WAS A FRIDAY NIGHT, AND THE KID WAS AT THE MOVIES.





KREE-ANG

HEY!  
PUT ME  
DOWN!

VEEEE

IT SET OFF *CROSS-COUNTRY*,  
DANCING OFF THE ROOFS OF  
HOUSES, ABOVE THE OBLIVIOUS  
HEADS OF THE CROWDS BELOW...

...REACHING THE SOCIAL  
HARMONY CENTER IN  
LESS THAN TEN MINUTES.

DAD!

LEONARD  
MACPHERSON, IT IS MY  
*DUTY* AS A UNATS DETECTIVE  
THIRD GRADE TO INFORM YOU  
THAT YOU ARE UNDER *ARREST*  
FOR TRADE IN CONTRABAND  
POSITRONICS.

HELLO,  
DETECTIVE.

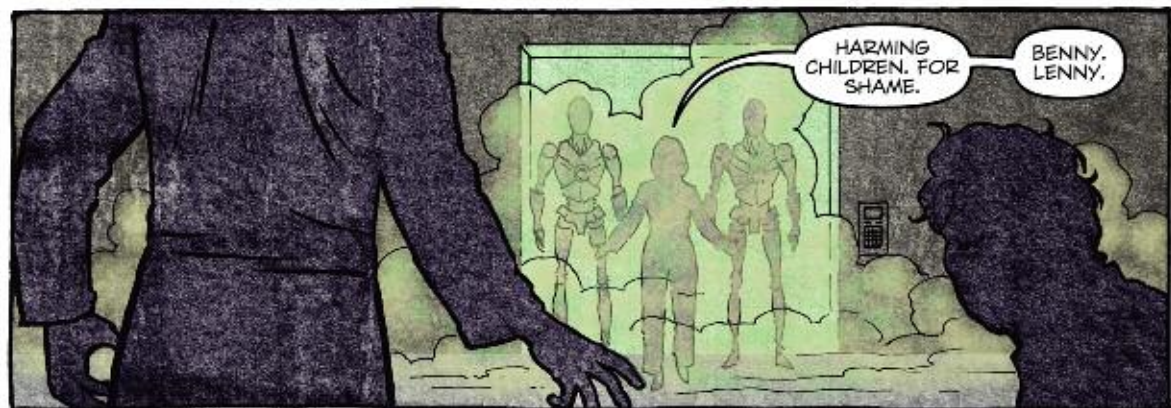
YOU HAVE  
THE FOLLOWING  
*RIGHTS*: TO A TRIAL  
PER CURRENT RULES OF DUE  
PROCESS; TO BE FREE FROM  
SELF-INCRIMINATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A COURT ORDER TO  
THE CONTRARY; TO CONSULT WITH  
A SOCIAL HARMONY ADVOCATE;  
AND TO A SPEEDY  
ARRAIGNMENT.

DO YOU  
UNDERSTAND  
YOUR RIGHTS?

ADA!

FWUMP















BEIJING WAS TALL. VERTICAL.

IT SMELLED LIKE BARBEQUE AND FLOWERS.











## DOCTOROW ON: "I, ROBOT"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Okay, Cory, the first question is probably the most obvious—how does your title "I, Robot" tie into the same title used by Isaac Asimov?

**Cory Doctorow:** Well, I wanted to revisit some of Asimov's assumptions. I've said this a lot: sf writers write about the present, even when they try to write about the future. Asimov was a New Dealer, someone who was profoundly moved by FDR's rationalist plan to put the country back on its feet by planning, regulating and shaping the way that technology and social structures operated.

So it was that Asimov imagined a world in which only one kind of computer could be built (a positronic brain) and that it would be controlled by one company, pretty much forever.

This is not far off from current regulatory proposals from the MAFIAA (the MPAA and RIAA, et al)—the idea that all technologies will be designed by their little Politburo and forced to adhere to standards intended to limit copying.

It's Orwellian—and so I decided to update the story by mashing up Asimov and *1984* and this is what I got.

**TW:** In your story, Natalie the "rogue" scientist tells Arturo the cop that he lives in a country where "inconvenient science is criminalized, where whole avenues of experimentation and research are shut down in the service of a half-baked superstition..." Does this relate to real world science vs. morality issues such as the stem cell research debate that is currently raging in the United States?

**CD:** Oh yes! But I was really thinking of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) that makes it a crime to tell people about the flaws in anti-copying software, like the stuff that stops you from watching foreign DVDs on your home player, or from listening to songs from the iTunes store on a non-Apple player.

Since 1998, telling people about the mathematical flaws in the cryptosystems used by these systems has been illegal. In 2001, the FBI jailed a foreign researcher, Dmitry Syklarov, who'd just given a presentation

describing how badly implemented Adobe's anti-copying technology for ebooks was. Dmitry said, basically, that the emperor had no clothes—so we put him in jail.

The fact is, it's never going to get any harder to copy data. Anyone who claims otherwise is either trying to sell you something or has not been paying attention for the past 20 years.

Making laws that prohibit telling people how easy it is to copy things doesn't make copying harder—it just makes criminals of us all.

**TW:** If you had the supreme power to create your own all-encompassing Three Laws, would you do it? If so, what would Doctorow's Three Laws be?

**CD:**

1. Don't punish the innocent to get at the guilty.
2. Never declare war on an abstract noun like "terrorism."
3. Free speech is more important than business models.

**TW:** Do you believe Western Civilization (and by this, I'm referring to North America, the UK and Western Europe) is falling behind Central Europe and the Eastern World in the fields of medicine, art, literature and physics in the same way you describe UNATS trailing Eurasia in your story? If so, do you feel there is a primary cause for the gap between the two?

**CD:** I don't think so—not right now. Central Europe and China are plagued by corruption and repression, which are antithetical to science. However, I think that the Brazilians are kicking serious ass, as are the Indians.

The gap arises because these countries don't have the same incumbent industries—pharmaceutical companies, entertainment giants—who are demanding legal protection from technological progress.



# AFTER THE SIEGE



Art by Danny Parsons

Danny Parsons



THE CITY. THREE HOURS BEFORE THE SIEGE.

MATA AND POPA FINALLY AGREED TO LET ME VISIT THE NEW CINEMA ACROSS THE STREET. ALL THE CHILDREN WOULD BE SPENDING THE DAY HERE, EXPLORING THIS NEW MARVEL.

THAT IS WHAT WE DO—EXPLORE EACH NEW FANTASTIC EVENT IN OUR LIVES. LAST WEEK IT WAS THE CLEVER LITTLE FLYING CARS RIPPING OVER YOUR HEAD AND BEFORE THAT IT HAD BEEN THE CANDY FOREST.

AND BEFORE THAT IT WAS THE SWARMS OF ROBOT INSECTS THAT GATHERED UP THE LITTER AND DUST AND SPIRITED IT ALL AWAY WHERE THEY SOMEHOW CHEWED IT UP AND MADE FACTORIES OUT OF IT.

BUT BEFORE ALL OF THAT WAS THE REVOLUTION. I WAS ONLY TEN THEN AND I BARELY REMEMBER IT. THE CINE WOULD REMIND US OF THAT TERRIBLE WARTIME WITH ITS FANTASTIC MOVING PICTURES.

IT WAS A TIME WHEN I WAS ALWAYS A LITTLE HUNGRY, MATA AND POPA WHISPERED ANGRILY AT EACH OTHER, AND MY LITTLE BROTHER, TROVER, CRIED THIN SICKLY CRIES ALL NIGHT.

ZOMBIISM WAS THE ORIGINAL CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION. WE NEEDED THE CURE AND THOSE WITH ACCESS TO IT WERE MORE CONCERNED OVER ROYALTIES AND PROFITS THAN SAVING LIVES.

KILL DAPE CRUSH TAB!

EWWW, ZOMBIES ARE DISGUSTING.

HAHAHAHA!









OH...  
HEH.

STEPPING ONTO THE STREET  
WAS LIKE WALKING INTO A  
DIFFERENT CITY.

THE AIR CARS AND TINY ROBOTS  
WERE GONE. THE SILENCE WAS  
LIKE THE RINGING IN YOUR EARS  
AFTER YOU TURN YOUR  
HEADPHONES UP TOO LOUD.



THROOM

THERE WAS A FAR AWAY  
SOUND LIKE THUNDER.

A SMELL LIKE THE DEAD  
WIFTED OFF THE SLIGHTEST  
BREEZE OVERHEAD.

FOLLOWED BY AN ICY COLD  
WIND AND A BLAST OF HEAT.



AHHH!

THEN BLACKNESS  
AND NOTHING...



THE DAY AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

SHE WAS A VERY LUCKY GIRL. THE BLAST DEAFENED HER, BUT THIS HEARING AID SHOULD FIX THE PROBLEM. YOU'LL NEED TO BRING HER BACK IN TEN YEARS FOR A BATTERY CHANGE.

...?



WE WALKED HOME THAT NIGHT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS FAR. THE METRO WASN'T WORKING AND THE AIR CARS WERE STILL GROUNDED.

SOME OF THE BUILDINGS WERE NOTHING BUT RUBBLE. ROBOTS AND PEOPLE LABORED TO MAKE SENSE OF THEM.

IT WAS THE NEXT DAY WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MATA HAD LIED. LEEZA HAD BEEN KILLED UNDER THE CINE.



THREE DAYS AFTER  
THE SIEGE BEGAN.

ARE YOU  
CRAZY? YOU  
CAN'T GO TO  
THE FRONT!

YOU HAVE  
TWO SMALL  
CHILDREN,  
WOMAN!

WHAA-HUFF-  
HUFF

HARALD, YOU  
KNOW I HAVE  
TO DO THIS.

IT'S NOT THE  
FRONT—IT'S  
OUR OWN  
CITY.

YOU NEVER GOT  
OVER THE GLORY  
OF FIGHTING, DID  
YOU?

YOU'RE AN  
ADDICT!

IS THAT  
WHAT YOU  
THINK?

YOU THINK  
I'M ADDICTED  
TO THIS?

HONOR AND  
COURAGE AND  
PATRIOTISM ARE  
VIRTUES. YOU MAKE  
THEM INTO VICES AND  
SHAME OUR CHILDREN  
WITH YOUR  
COWARDICE.

I GO TO  
FIGHT NOW,  
HARALD... FOR  
ALL OF US.

BE STRONG  
FOR YOUR FAMILY  
AND CITY, VALE.





TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

EVERY ADULT FIGHTS FOR THE CITY, COMRADE.

WHEN THE WOMAN FROM THE CITY CAME FOR POPA, NO AMOUNT OF REASON COULD CHANGE HER DEMANDS. HE LEFT THAT DAY TO DIG TRENCHES FOR THE CITY.



TWO WEEKS AND ONE DAY AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

VALE? I'M BACK, WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?

MATA! THE CITY CAME FOR HIM. HE WAS DIGGING TRENCHES YESTERDAY AND WE'VE NOT SEEN HIM SINCE.



GOOD. GOOD... WE NEED MORE TRENCHES. WE'LL TAKE THE WAR TO THOSE BASTARDS AND SLIP AWAY BEFORE THEY KNOW WE'VE KILLED THEM.



THAT NIGHT, THE CITY CAME FOR ME.

COMRADE. IT IS TIME FOR YOUR LITTLE GIRL TO SERVE.



NO.

MATA?



NO? NO IS NOT AN OPTION, COMRADE.

MY HUSBAND DIGS. I FIGHT. MY DAUGHTER CARES FOR OUR SON. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR THIS FAMILY.



COMRADE, YOUR GIRL MUST CARRY WATER FOR THE OLD ONES IN THE BUILDING. DAS BOY WILL BE KEPT IN THE CRECHE WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN.

WE ALL SERVE THE CITY.



YOU WILL CARRY WATER.





ONE MONTH AFTER  
THE SIEGE BEGAN.

CARRYING WATER WAS EXHAUSTING  
WORK. BUT ALL THE CHILDREN MY  
AGE WERE ALSO HUSTLING THE  
LOADS AND THAT MADE IT EASIER.



MATA?  
WHAT'S  
WRONG?

THERE ARE NEW  
TRENCH-BUSTER  
MISSILES ON THE  
EASTERN FRONT.

THE BASTARDS  
ARE TRADING WITH THE  
EU AND THE AMERICANS  
FOR BETTER WEAPONS.  
THEY SAY WE ARE LAWLESS  
THIEVES WHO DEPRIVE  
THEM OF ALL THEIR  
ROYALTIES.



WHAT IS IT,  
MATA? ARE  
YOU HURT?

"ROYALTIES."  
THEY KILL US  
FOR THEIR  
DAMNED  
PROFITS.

BASTARDS.



IT'S YOUR  
FATHER... THEY  
KILLED HIM, VALE.  
YOUR FATHER  
IS DEAD.

NO. POPA IS  
DIGGING AWAY  
FROM THE FRONT,  
WHERE IT'S  
SAFE.



I SAW THE  
BODY! I HELD  
HIS HEAD!

HE IS  
DEAD!



NO, NOT  
POPA!















EIGHT MONTHS AFTER  
HER FATHER DIED.

MATA DIDN'T COME HOME FROM  
THE FIGHTING FOR THREE WEEKS.  
I PRAYED SHE WASN'T DEAD.

OH,  
MATA...



NINE MONTHS AFTER  
HER FATHER DIED.

WINTER SETTLED IN THAT WEEK AND THE  
COLD WAS OUR CONSTANT COMPANION.  
BREAD RATIONS WERE CUT AGAIN TO 120  
GRAMS AND THEY HAD HARD STONY  
PEBBLES IN IT. EVERYONE KNEW THEY  
WERE THERE TO INCREASE THE WEIGHT.





SOON THE CITY WAS USING  
THE PRINTERS TO MAKE  
EVERYTHING WE NEEDED.

IT DIDN'T MATTER TO US  
IF WE DIDN'T BUY IT  
FROM THE COPYRIGHT  
OWNERS. WE WERE  
DOING WHAT WE NEEDED  
TO DO TO SURVIVE.









THAT NIGHT THE  
FEVER SET IN.

UHHHNN

NO... NO...

...NO!

SSSSO  
GGGOLD.

IN THE STRUGGLE TO FIGHT  
OFF THE ZOMBIE, I HAD BEEN  
BITTEN. THE SOLDIER SAID  
THERE WAS NO CURE.

OH, NO.

LESS THAN A WEEK TO LIVE.  
WHO WOULD TAKE CARE OF  
TROVER WHILE MATA WAS  
GONE FIGHTING THE WAR?

THERE WAS ONLY ONE  
PERSON IN THE ENTIRE  
CITY WHO COULD HELP.

PLEASE...  
PLEASE  
ANSWER...

THUMP  
THUMP  
THUMP

GIRL, YOU'D  
BETTER HAVE A GOOD  
REASON FOR WAKING  
UP THE WHOLE FUCKING  
STREET AT THREE IN  
THE MORNING.

...I NEED  
TO SEE...

...I NEED  
TO SEE THE  
WIZARD.









ALL RIGHT.  
I'M A WIZARD,  
RIGHT, A MAGICIAN  
OF SORTS. AND ALL  
MAGICIANS HAVE  
ASSISTANTS.

I WANT YOU TO  
BE MY ASSISTANT.  
TAKE THESE AND PLANT  
THEM IN NO FEWER THAN  
THREE-HUNDRED PLACES  
AT THE FRONT WHERE  
FIGHTING IS LIKELY  
TO OCCUR.

THEY'RE  
SPY EYES?

YES.



IF I'M  
CAUGHT?

YOU'LL BE SHOT.  
YOUR FAMILY WILL BE  
SHOT. ALL OF US HERE  
WILL BE SHOT.

DON'T GET  
CAUGHT.

TWO DAYS AFTER BEING  
BITTEN BY THE ZOMBIE.

THE FEVER HAD BECOME MY  
CONSTANT COMPANION. IT MADE ME  
WALK LIKE AN OLD WOMAN AND I  
HAD TROUBLE FOCUSING MY EYES.



I RECOGNIZE THE KIDS IN THE TRENCH.  
THEY WERE MY FRIENDS ONE TIME, WHAT  
SEEMED LIKE YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS ME  
AND NOT AN INCURABLE WALKING CORPSE.



ONE, TWO,  
THREE...

SHUNK





THE DAMNED AMERICAN  
TRENCH-BUSTER MISSILES  
CLAIMED MORE LIVES. OH,  
POPA... I MISS YOU.



AAAAHHH!

ARGHHHH!



THIRTY,  
FORTY,  
FIFTY...



ONE-TEN,  
ONE-TWENTY...

KRAK-OOM



OH!



OOOF!

BASTARDS.





OW, OW,  
OW.

THIRTY FEET FURTHER DOWN THE TRENCH WAS AN ENEMY SOLDIER. I'D NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN A LIVE ENEMY, ONLY THE DEATH AND CARNAGE THEY CAUSED.



WAIT,  
PLEASE.

<WHO ARE  
YOU, WHY ARE  
YOU HERE?>

HE SPOKE A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE,  
THE ONE FROM THE CINE THAT WE  
HEARD SO OFTEN.



DESPERATE, I TRIED A  
FEW OF THE PHRASES  
THAT WE HEARD MOST  
OFTEN IN THE MOVIES.

<FRIEND,  
VALENTINE.>

<I AM  
WITHNAIL.>



I'D NEVER KISSED A BOY BEFORE, BUT  
I'D BE DEAD IN A FEW DAYS FROM THE  
ZOMBIISM ANYWAY, AND IT MIGHT HELP  
ME GET THROUGH TO HIM. I DIDN'T WANT  
TO END UP DEAD IN A TRENCH LIKE POPA.



HE KISSED ME BACK FOR A MOMENT  
BEFORE PULLING AWAY. THE LOOK ON  
HIS FACE CHANGED, SOFTENED. HE  
ALMOST LOOKED LIKE HE WOULD CRY.



<GOODBYE,  
WITHNAIL.>

I'LL NEVER  
FORGET  
YOU.



THE SPY-EYES WERE ALL PLANTED. I RAN AS FAST AS I COULD OUT OF THE TRENCHES AND THROUGH THE CITY. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS REACH THE WIZARD TO CONFIRM THAT HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF MATA AND TROVER WHEN I WAS GONE, DEAD AND SHAMBLING AMONG THE ZOMBIES.



BUT THE FEVER HAD COME BACK WORSE THAN EVER, AND MY ARMS AND LEGS WOULDN'T WORK RIGHT. THE ZOMBIISM WAS KILLING ME FASTER THAN THE SOLDIER HAD SAID.



WIZARD...



TWO DAYS AFTER KISSING WITH NAIL.

YOU'LL LIVE.

PROBABLY.



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A CERTAINTY IF YOU'D FUCKING TOLD ME YOU HAD ZOMBIISM, YOU LITTLE IDIOT.

YOU AGREED TO TAKE CARE OF MY FAMILY.

I THINK THAT CURING YOUR ZOMBIISM IS REPAYMENT ENOUGH, SO I'VE UNILATERALLY RENEGOTIATED THE TERMS OF OUR DEAL.



YOU CURED ME?

THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS WE HAVE ACCESS TO HERE THAT YOU CAN'T GET IN THE CITY. WHAT YOU HAD WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU IF HE HADN'T HELPED.



I WON'T BETRAY MY CITY TO ITS ENEMIES EVER AGAIN.

I WAS A TRAITOR ONCE, BUT I HAD A FEVER AND I WAS DYING.











TWO YEARS AFTER THE SIEGE BEGAN.

ONE MORNING I AWOKE DEAF. MATA TRIED EVERYTHING BUT NO DOCTORS COULD HELP HER.



LATER.







OH, MATA...  
I WILL MAKE  
THIS RIGHT.



COME,  
TROVER. WE  
CAN WIN THE  
WAR.



I  
KNOW OF A  
TRAITOR...  
...I CAN  
BRING HIM TO  
YOU. HE HAS  
WORKING  
PRINTERS.



I WILL  
COME WITH YOU.  
YOUR MOTHER  
WAS A HERO,  
VALENTINE.



YOU ARE  
SURE THIS IS  
THE PLACE,  
NO?

YES.



COMRADE  
ANA, COMRADE  
GEORG.

THE GIRL  
TELLS ME YOU  
HAVE CONTRABAND.  
IT IS MY DUTY TO  
COME IN AND SEARCH  
YOUR PREMISES  
FOR IT.



HELLO,  
VALENTINE. THE  
FOOD AND CLOTHES YOU  
STOLE FROM US WASN'T  
CONTRABAND. IT WAS  
OUR SAVINGS.

GO AHEAD AND  
SEARCH. YOU'LL  
FIND NOTHING, I  
ASSURE YOU.





THIS ISN'T THE  
RIGHT FLAT. IT'S  
THROUGH THERE!  
IT'S A FALSE  
WALL.

HE HAS  
HARDENED LOGIC  
PRINTERS ON THE  
OTHER SIDE OF THAT  
WALL. HE COULD  
WIN THE  
WAR!



YOUR MOTHER  
WOULD BE ASHAMED  
OF YOU. THERE IS  
NOTHING HERE. LET'S  
LEAVE THESE PEOPLE  
IN PEACE.



NO... MY  
MOTHER DIED  
FOR THIS  
CITY.



I WANT TO SEE  
THE PEOPLE WHO  
FIGHT THE INFOWAR.  
THEY WILL BELIEVE ME  
ABOUT THE WIZARD AND  
HIS TECHNOLOGY. IF  
YOU DON'T TAKE ME,  
I'LL KILL YOU.



STUPID GIRL.  
EVEN IF THE WIZARD  
HAD THIS CONTRABAND  
TECHNOLOGY, IT WOULD  
BE LONG GONE  
BEFORE WE COULD  
RETRIEVE IT.



HE GAVE SOME  
OF THE TECHNOLOGY  
TO ME. HE FIXED MY  
HEARING AIDS WITH  
HARDENED LOGIC.  
IT'S IN MY HEAD.



YOU'RE NOT  
LYING? HARDENED  
LOGIC THAT HAS NOT  
BEEN COMPROMISED  
BY THE ENEMY'S  
ATTACK?

SHE WAS  
DEAF THIS  
MORNING. MY  
SISTER ISN'T  
LYING.





COME WITH ME.

NOW WE CLEAN HOUSE.



YOU'RE TOO LATE, IT'S ALL GONE. YOU WON'T GET A SCRAP OF IT.

WHAT A GODDAMNED WASTE. SPITEFUL, STUPID, BONEHEADED...

WITHIN A FEW HOURS THE CITY PEOPLE HAD DOWNLOADED THE HARDENED LOGIC FROM MY HEARING AID AND SET TO WORK AT COUNTERING THE ENEMY'S DAMAGE TO OUR TECHNOLOGY.



...IT WAS HER HEARING AIDS THAT GAVE IT AWAY, WASN'T IT?

YES, WIZARD. THE HARDENED LOGIC IS BEING USED TO CONFOUND THE ENEMIES OF THE SIEGE AS WE SPEAK.



IT'S OVER, FINALLY.



TEN YEARS AFTER THE SIEGE.

SOON THE PRINTERS CAME BACK ON LINE AND MEDICINE, FOOD, AND SUPPLIES WERE MADE AND DELIVERED. REPAIRED BUILDINGS APPEARED AND MARVELOUS AIR CARS WERE IN THE SKY AGAIN.

IN A CEREMONY IN THE MAIN SQUARE I RECEIVED THE OFFICIAL MEDAL FROM THE OLD COMRADE HERO HIMSELF AND BECAME A HERO OF THE CITY LIKE MATA.



VALENTINE? I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S YOU!

WITHNAIL?!

WE WALKED AND TALKED AND FINALLY KISSED AGAIN BEFORE GOING TO THE REBUILT CINE TO WATCH ONE OF THE OLD MOVIES.

WE STARTED SOMETHING BACK THEN IN THE TRENCHES, EACH REALIZING THAT NEITHER SIDE REALLY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR. THAT SOMETHING GAVE US HOPE AND STRENGTH AND JOY AND LOVE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

END.





## DOCTOROW ON: "AFTER THE SIEGE"

**Editor Tom Waltz:** Cory, you've said in past interviews that the story "After the Siege" holds an especially personal meaning to you. For those who don't know, could you please explain why that is?

**Cory Doctorow:** This story is based loosely on the Siege of Leningrad, one of the most brutal moments in WWII—Leningrad, a city of millions, was laid siege to by Hitler's army for 900 days, and for most of that time, they were not re-provisioned. Residents were all inducted into civil defense tasks, grueling and grisly never-ending labor. By the second winter, they'd burned every stick of furniture and eaten every animal—including the rats. There was even cannibalism. Most of these extreme effects were Stalin's fault: he considered Hitler his ally, so when the shelling started, he refused to allow anyone in Leningrad to defend themselves—generals were ordered to stay in their summer homes and not come back to join the army. No one—not even children—was allowed to evacuate.

My grandmother, Valentina Rachman, was twelve when the siege began. She lived in Leningrad with her two-year-old brother (my great-uncle Bora, who is now one of the curators at the brilliant Popov Communications Museum, a kind of Soviet Silicon Valley Computer Museum) and her parents. It was two years before she was evacuated, and she hauled corpses, dug trenches, and starved. When she was fourteen, they evacuated her to Siberia, where she recuperated working on a horse farm, and then ended up in the Red Army, where she met my grandfather. She got pregnant, so they stole papers and fled to Azerbaijan, where my father was born.

Growing up, I never understood the Siege. My grandmother would tell us she'd experienced horrors in the war, and I'd kind of shrug, thinking of friends whose families had been through the concentration camps. I remember thinking, "You spent most of the war at home with your family... how bad could it have been?"

But in 2006, I visited St. Petersburg (the present name for Leningrad) with my parents, grandmother, brother and sister-in-law, saw my varied and sprawling family there and walked the streets. It was high summer—not quite the White Nights (the period in June when the sun never

sets and the locals stay out all night reveling), but still hot and sunny, with long bloody sunsets that started at 9 P.M. and lingered for an hour or more.

My grandmother walked us through the streets of her childhood and pointed to buildings, saying things like, "I was too weak to carry the body from that building so we threw him out the window and scraped him up afterwards." She told us about cannibalism and war, about noble deeds and foul ones, and I was never the same. A month later, I started this story while on a flight from London to Singapore. I wrote 6,000 words in the sky, and the rest over the next week or two on further long-haul flights. I'd settle into my seat and three thousand words would just *happen*. And I'd look out the window and we'd be over some ocean again.

I gave this story's initial publication rights to *Esli*, a Russian-language science fiction magazine. They translated it for me and I gave a copy to my grandmother.

**TW:** Politically speaking, Russia appears to be at an interesting crossroads these days with President Putin working to maintain control of the country even after his presidency expires. Do you see any correlation between the real world instability of that country with the events that take place in "After the Siege"?

**CD:** Well, sort of. Russia's a complete fucking disaster, of course, and Putin's a creepy, thuggish ex-KGB apparat whose machine is in large part responsible for turning Russia into a nation that is losing ten percent of its population every year due to early mortality.

But Russia isn't the best parallel to the mythical nation of "After the Siege;" a better parallel would be any of the many former Soviet republics—or even Iraq—where all the local infrastructure has been sold at fire-sale rates to foreign companies to pay off a debt that the former dictators owed to Western governments.

It's the slimiest of slimy tricks—a protection racket played against an entire nation. You get a crummy dictatorship whose local strongman borrows gigantic amounts from Western banks while starving and torturing his people. Then, after the people get rid of him (or





invaders topple him), his debts are passed on to the people he's been torturing and killing and oppressing (often with guns bought with Western loans).

These people are expected to pay the construction costs for the torture chambers they've been suffering in, and to do so, they have to sell off their waterworks, power, roads, medical system—you name it. These are then run like corrupt fast-food outlets, delivering least value for most money, so the cost of everything from bread to power goes through the roof, while a few Fortune 100s get even richer (think of Chile for a sterling example of this).

This is the kind of government that I pictured the Revolutionaries of Moma and Popa's generation toppling. Cowards and profiteers who'd rather make nice with the cruel artificial life forms we call corporations than give their own people bread and medicine.

**TW:** There is a sequence in "After the Siege" where the main character, Valentine, plants electronic spy eyes in the trenches along the front lines at the behest of the Wizard, who says he uses them to document the atrocities there, though later he is accused of using the devices to exploit the violence for profit and entertainment. Is it fair to assume you are comparing these fictional devices to real-life embedded reporters who were attached to military units during the Iraq invasion?

**CD:** Well, sure—naturally. The media's total abdication of its role in Iraq to serve as the fourth estate and report objectively and fairly on what actually happens and happened there was the disgrace of this young century. They say piracy will kill television—if it destroys these bastards and the cynical profiteers who turned the press into a gutless propaganda machine, then so much the better. Steal some TV, kids—you're protecting democracy!

**TW:** Many people in your story suffer from a disease you term as "Zombiism." Is this comparable to, say, the horrendously extreme amount of AIDS cases in Africa, a continent also rife with warfare?

**CD:** Yeah, and all the other diseases—like malaria, which kills one person every second—that our pharma companies can't even be bothered to do research on because boner-pills are so much more profitable.

We grant global monopolies to these companies over the reproduction of chemical compounds. They argue that they need these patents because otherwise, no one would do the core research they do and we'd all be dead of disease without them.

But what do they spend their regulatory windfall on? Figuring out how to reformulate heartburn pills that are going public domain so that they can be re-patented, cheating the system and the world out of twenty more years of low-cost access to their magic potions; marketing budgets that beggar the imagination; lobbyists arguing for stricter rules.

Meanwhile, people are actually dying, in great numbers, of diseases treatable by drugs that Roche and Pfizer and the rest of the dope-mafia won't sell them at an accessible price, and won't let them make themselves.

**TW:** Well, this is the last issue in this first volume of IDW's *Cory Doctorow's Futuristic Tales of the Here and Now*. How do you feel about this adventure in the world of comic books?

**CD:** This has been a brilliant ride! I've always been a funnybook reader, but I never dreamt I'd be involved in their creation. Now that I've done so, I'm keen to do some more. I just wrote my first script, a little eight-page story for Slave Labor's final issue of *The Haunted Mansion* comic, and it was a blast. Now I'm thinking about other ways I can get involved in the industry.

**IDW**

